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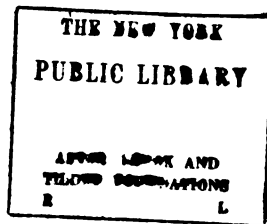
AN "OUTING" STORY FOR BOYS.

BY WILLARD GOSS.



DAVID C. COOK PUBLISHING COMPANY,  
CHICAGO and NEW YORK.  
ELGIN, ILLINOIS.

TO THE CHOIR BOYS OF EMMANUEL CHURCH,  
ANACOSTIA, D. C.



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# THE ISLE OF THE LAKE.

AN "OUTING" STORY FOR BOYS.

## PREFACE.

*My Dear Boys:* To write the following pages for your entertainment has been a recreation for me. It has occupied my vacation hours; but my purpose has been not only to entertain but to help you to unselfish and noble endeavors by relating the adventures of certain youths who met their difficulties and dangers in a generous, manly and brave spirit.

Your lives are influenced, even your characters are formed in large measure, by impressions received from outside. The influence over

you of the books you read is very great, because from them is received an impress on the mind for good or ill that may last a lifetime.

If, by reading the following simple story of peril and adventure, your purpose to do right is strengthened, and you are encouraged to be always true and manly in your conduct, my purpose in writing it will be accomplished.

WILLARD GOSS.

Anacostia, D. C., October, 1902.

## THE ISLE OF THE LAKE.

### CHAPTER I.

ONE DAY in the early part of June, 1893, a party of twelve youths stood on the rickety wharf of a little town in Michigan on the western shore of Lake Huron, dressed and equipped for an extended "outing" expedition. It was evident, from the disappointed expression in many of their faces, that something had occurred to disarrange their plans. They were engaged in an animated discussion of the situation.

"I think it's a downright shame for old Wilkins to disappoint us in this way!" Marshall Watt, a stout youth of seventeen, was saying. "He agreed to take us, and he ought to stick to his bargain."

"That's so," responded Thomas Hendry, who always agreed with Marshall. "I believe his story about having to go to Bay City with a cargo of corn is all bosh. This isn't the time for corn, anyhow!"

"Not the time for corn!" repeated Frank Burton, laughing. "Listen, fellows! Tom thinks corn spoils on your hands like clams or oysters!"

"Tom never lets any clams or oysters spoil on his hands," laughed William Staples, his freckled face beaming good-naturedly.

"Pshaw! What has all that got to do with it?" exclaimed Carl Slocum, discontentedly. "Here we are, bag and baggage, with no way to get to our camping ground, just because Captain

Wilkins has broken his word with us. We're in a mighty bad predicament; and, for my part, I should like to know what we're going to do. I'd like to get hold of a sloop somewhere, or a small yacht; we'd be independent of these freshwater captains then."

"But you know that's out of the question, Carl," replied James Wilkinson, "and that's just what's the trouble. Captain Wilkins knows perfectly well we can't get anybody else to take us, and that is probably what makes him so independent about it. But it's a serious matter for us, for, if we have to wait for him to go down to Bay City, we shall eat up all our supplies before we get into camp."

"Well, boys, we shall gain nothing by this idle discussion, that is certain," interposed Joseph Duncan, the eldest of the party and the acknowledged leader. "I do not think any blame can justly be attached to Captain Wilkins. You know he did not expect us so soon. When the fire occurred, obliging the faculty to dismiss us earlier than usual, you all voted to meet here to-day; but I urged you not to change your plans. I was afraid we might be interfering with the captain's own arrangements, and it has turned out just as I expected. Captain Wilkins tells me he did not get my letter telling him of the new arrangement until it was too late to change his own. He wrote me, but his letter had not reached me when I left home. So, all things considered, I think we have no one to blame but ourselves."



"That's so; Duncan is right!" cried several. "It can't be helped, anyhow," added Frank, "so what's the use of being glum about it? '*Ne cede malis*,' as Prof. Hobson says; which, in plain English, means, 'Keep a stiff upper lip!'"

"Well, I should like to know what you fellows propose to do," responded Marshall, a little sulkily.

"Do!" cried Will Staples, pointing up the road, "why, help Dick Stockland unload his wagon, of course. Look! There he comes with a big load of farmer's produce. Hurrah! 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.' If we'd sailed bright and early this morning, as we expected, we should have missed a big addition to our stores. Three cheers for Stockie and his butter and cheese!"

And off he started on a keen run, followed by half a dozen of the others. As they ran they shouted a welcome to their tardy companion, who swung his hat and cheered in response.

"What made you so late, Dick?" asked one of them breathlessly, as they drew near.

"The trouble was all with this old rickety vehicle," answered Richard. "The other wagon was sent to mill and I had to take this one, and the old thing broke down with me. I had to ride a mile and a half to get a new linchpin. But when are we going to sail?"

"That's the question—when?"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Captain Wilkins can't take us."

"He can't!" and Richard's large eyes opened wide in surprise.

"No; can't take us," repeated Ransom Storey, with a drawl, approaching the wagon deliberately (for he was never in a hurry), and adding, "'As you brew, so must you bake.' You all voted to come to-day, and here we are on a fool's errand."

"Never you mind, Rans; we'll find a camping ground yet," responded Will, cheerfully.

"That we will!" cried Richard, "if we have to put up our tent by the side of the road. I for one don't propose to be cheated out of our fun now, after all the trouble I've had with this old, tumbledown wagon."

"What have you got in it, Dick?" asked James.

"Oh, a little of everything—barrel of potatoes, two crates of chickens, a big bag of salt, and so forth, *ad infinitum*."

"I should think so by the looks of that load," laughed Will; "but what are you going to do with so much salt? You've got enough to make a ton of corned beef."

"Salt fish with it, of course. I intend to bring a lot home."

"I guess we'll have salt enough," laughed James. "Every fellow has brought enough to salt a carload of fish. They must think we won't want anything else to eat for the rest of our lives."

"Salt is cheap, Jim; that's the reason," replied Frank. "We must practice economy, you know, and a little over-seasoning will make the provisions last longer."

"But chickens, Dick! What do you want of

two crates?" asked Samuel Porter. "We're going to shoot ducks, you know."

"Ducks! Ha! I guess we'd starve if we had to depend on this crowd. There isn't one here that wouldn't miss nine shots out of ten."

"Except me, Dick!" exclaimed Henry Mauderson, suggestively called "Boaster," which had been contracted into "Buster,"—"except me, you know, for you never knew me to miss my mark."

"Yes, he has, Buster!" cried Will; "you've missed hundreds of 'em."

"When, I should like to know?" asked Henry, seriously.

"In Virgil, of course!"

This thrust raised a laugh at Henry's expense, but he was accustomed to such sallies and took it good-naturedly. The boys now all took hold and in a short time had the wagon unloaded. As they stood around the pile of produce thus unexpectedly added to their stores, discussing what was next to be done, Captain Wilkins and Duncan approached them.

"I was jest sayin' to Mr. Duncan here," said the captain, "that I see my boy Ike's comin' in with his schooner. You can see her sail over the headland yonder. She's a lighter vessel than mine and a Number One sailer. I wa'n't expectin' him for a week yet, an' so didn't say nothin' about it before. He's been across the lake, an' was expectin' a job over there, but I rather guess he's been disappointed. Now, I presume he can take ye. The fact is, business is dull now, an' I shouldn't wonder if Ike would be glad to give ye a cruise as long as ye want—cheap, too—that is, if some of ye can lend a hand to help work the vessel now an' then, for he's rather short o' hands."

The boys waited to hear no more, but, shouting "Hurrah for Ike!" started on a race down to the wharf to meet the incoming vessel. Duncan followed more slowly with the captain.

"I suppose, Captain Wilkins," he said, with a little hesitation, "that your son Isaac is entirely trustworthy—I mean, that he is perfectly competent to sail his vessel safely almost anywhere on these great lakes?"

"If he wa'n't he wouldn't be sailin' a vessel with my consent," replied the captain, quickly. "Why, Mr. Duncan, he's as safe a sailor's I be, an' I've been sailin' these waters for over thirty year."

"That is saying a great deal, certainly, and I have great confidence in your judgment. My father has told me that you have the reputation of being one of the most experienced and reliable captains on Lake Huron."

"Wal, I never lost a vessel yet, that's a fact," modestly replied the captain, gratified by this prudent remark.

"And that is the reason why I applied to you in the first place," Duncan went on. "But you can understand my solicitude with regard to these young men, or more properly boys, who have been placed in my care. I am a student in the same college with them, but also a teacher in the preparatory department, and, being so much older than they, their parents

have placed them under my entire charge for this trip. They are as noble fellows as ever lived, but thoughtless of danger and needing at times a little restraint. That is why I asked about your son. He, too, is young, and a young man is sometimes more venturesome than a person of your age and experience would be."

"Wal, yes, that's so. But Ike ain't venturesome. He was bred on the water and trained under my own hand. There ain't nothin' about sailin' craft that he hain't had a good chance to learn, an' he's learned it pretty thorough, runnin' no risks with the rest on't, for I consider that one o' the fundamentals, as they say. No: Ike's a careful sailor, and besides, he's too fond of that trim little craft o' his'n to let any harm come to her if he can help it. It's his fust venture for himself, that schooner is, an' he hain't had her more'n two months. He built her himself—that is, he worked all last winter on her with old Doc Chipman, the best shipbuilder in these parts, and he's as proud o' her as you will be of your fust sermon, Mr. Duncan, when you get to preachin'."

Duncan smiled but said nothing. The captain went on:

"Ike's young, as you say, but he's as old as you be, I guess; how old are you, Mr. Duncan?"

"I shall be twenty-two my next birthday," replied Duncan, considerably amused.

"Yes; wal, Ike ain't fur from your age then. I guess there won't be no trouble. Now, what I was goin' to say is this: he may want a couple o' them young fellers to take a turn at the wheel now 'n' then, or help in some other way, 'cause his best man is sick an' t'other one's a green Irish lubber that don't know a towline from a hawser. I'm speakin' in Ike's interest now, for I don't like to see him go out with one hand as he did this time—it makes it awful hard on him, 'specially of nights. Now, if you can find a couple o' stiddy chaps in this crowd that are willin' to go as a part of Ike's crew, it'll be a help to him and take something off the cost, too. I'd like to see the lively chaps have a good time and make up for the disappointment I've given 'em. That's why I propose this plan."

"We have two youths with us who are accustomed to sailing vessels. The father of one of them, Carl Slocum, has a fine yacht on Chesapeake Bay, and he has often sailed it as far down as Old Point Comfort. This I know, for I have been out with him."

"Yes; wal, that's all very well; but a little knowledge is sometimes wuss'n none at all. If a boy thinks he knows it all when he don't, he's apt to be a troublesome sort of a customer to get along with. I'd rather have a reg'lar green lubber 't has common sense than a dozen land yachtmen that think they know more'n I do. But of course I admit it's an advantage, when extra help is needed, for a lubber to know the difference between stayin' the braces an' haulin' a kedge; so, if young Slocum's willin' to learn what he don't know, I guess he'll do."

By this time they had reached the wharf.

As they walked along the stretch of loose plank leading out over the deep water, the "trim little craft," as Captain Wilkins had called her, drifted slowly within speaking distance, her sails lowered and her youthful skipper at the wheel quietly guiding her movements. The boys were nearly wild with enthusiasm. Cheer after cheer greeted Isaac, as he skillfully brought his vessel up alongside the spot where they were standing.

Duncan had an interview with him and a satisfactory arrangement was soon made. The boys were eager for a long cruise, and Isaac agreed to take them for a sum—including his own board and that of his hand, Patrick Reilly—but little in advance of the price they had expected to pay his father for carrying them to their camping ground and back. This was far better than they had dared to hope. Of course they were all perfectly delighted, and they now thought Captain Wilkins one of the most obliging and reliable men they had ever met!

It was arranged that Carl Slocum and Samuel Porter, both of whom claimed to have some knowledge of sailing vessels, should take their regular turns at the wheel and assist in other ways when necessary; whereupon they were immediately styled by their companions the First and Second Officers.

After loading their effects, a consultation was held in the cabin to decide upon their future course. They would not go into camp now until their cruise was over, and the question was, Where should they go? Frank Burton, always ready with suggestions, proposed that they should sail directly to Chicago and visit the World's Fair.

"It's our best chance to visit the big show," he argued, "for we can lodge and take our meals right here on this vessel, and it will cost us nothing but our admission fees."

Although most of the boys were expecting to visit the fair later in the summer, the temptation to do so immediately in the novel way proposed was too strong to be resisted. Frank's argument prevailed, and, Duncan consenting, Isaac was instructed to sail directly for the Strait of Mackinaw and Lake Michigan, en route to Chicago. Isaac was also well pleased with this arrangement, for he, too, had a desire to see the wonders of the great show. An hour later he sailed out of the little harbor with a fine breeze, directing the course of his vessel northwest.

## CHAPTER II.

IT WAS eleven o'clock. The moon had set, but the stars were shining, obscured here and there by drifting clouds. The little vessel was riding the waves gallantly. Eight hours the boys had been sailing under a steady breeze and had made excellent progress. They were joyous and enthusiastic over the prospect before them, and loudly praised the sailing qualities of "The Venture," as Isaac had named his schooner.

Carl Slocum discoursed learnedly of ships and shipping, embellishing his conversation with nautical phrases, and relating many anecdotes in which his own experience on Chesapeake Bay figured very largely.

It was his turn at the wheel from twelve to four. Isaac had intended to remain on deck with him at least a part of the time, but he had been up nearly the whole of two nights and sorely needed rest. This he explained to Duncan, saying:

"Pat came near running us aground over on the Canada shore, and I didn't dare leave him alone after that for fear he might wreck us; so we were both of us up two nights running. Young Slocum here, I see, knows a good deal about handling a vessel, and I guess I'll leave him alone for this watch."

"As you think best, Isaac," replied Duncan. "Carl understands sailing very well, I know, and, if you will give him instructions how to steer, I am sure there will be no trouble."

"But one of the boys'll have to stay with him to call me up if anything goes wrong; or, if not, to call the next watch. He can't leave the wheel to do it himself."

"Let me stay with Carl," pleaded Walter Stearns, a little fellow of twelve who, with a companion of the same age, Willie Evans, was one of Duncan's pupils and accompanied the party. "Let me stay! I just love to be on deck at night."

"Will this little fellow do?" asked Duncan.

"Yes; he's only got to call me or Porter."

So Carl was placed at the wheel at twelve with Walter, who took a camp stool and sat down by his side as the companion of his watch. Isaac gave him particular instructions how to steer.

"Our course is nor'west now," he said. "I always steer by the coast along here, 'cause I know it so well, but you'd better take the north star for your guide, keeping about this distance from the shore line. Don't haul in with the land—we're near enough now. Keep the star just abaft the gaff tops'll till you sight a point of land on your port bow; then haul off and round it at a good distance and come back to your course."

"All right!"

"In about three hours, if this breeze keeps up, you'll see a light dead ahead. Haul up with it and pass it, leaving it well to port. Then it'll be a steady course due west till we get into the Strait. Now, have you got it all right?"

"Yes, as straight as a bowline."

"All right, then. If all goes well you may call Porter for the next watch, but be sure to tell him everything."

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied Carl, with the air of an old tar who knows his business.

Isaac then went below. An hour later Carl saw the point of land and immediately changed his course, steering further out into the lake.

"I'll give that point of land a wide berth," he said to Walter. "Deep water is always the safest. Did you know that?"

"No; I feel safer when land is insight."

"There's where you and landmen generally make a mistake. Land is always more dangerous for navigators, on account of the rocks and shoals. On the great ships that sail across the ocean the captain always stays on the bridge till they get clear of the land; then he takes it easy for the rest of the voyage till land comes in sight again."

"He does! Why does he?"

"Because, as I said, it's safer out in the broad ocean. There are no rocks or reefs to encounter there."

"But there might be icebergs."

"Icebergs! Of course; but they can generally tell when they're in the vicinity of icebergs."

"How can they?"

"By the feeling."

"By the feeling! How can a navigator feel an iceberg?"

"Why, it makes the atmosphere colder, just as a big chunk of ice does in a refrigerator."

"Oh! I never thought of that."

"No, I suppose not. There are a good many things you never thought of, I presume. You never thought how they measure the distance they sail on the ocean, did you?"

"No; how do they?"

"By a log."

"A log! I should think that was a funny thing to measure distance by."

"Oh, I don't mean a regular mill log, but an instrument called a log. It's made in a sort of triangular shape, and, when they heave it into the water it is supposed to remain stationary, while the line unwinds on board the ship from a little instrument that records the number of knots."

"Have we a log on this vessel?"

"No; we don't need one."

"How fast do you suppose we're sailing?"

"It's hard to tell; but we're making mighty good time—I know that. This schooner is a regular clipper to sail."

"It seems to me we are going pretty fast, and we're getting a good ways out, too, Carl. We can hardly see the land at all now."

"That doesn't make any difference. The further we get out the better. Were you ever out of sight of land?"

"No; were you?"

"Yes, many a time. I'm going out now, so you can see how it seems. This is a fine vessel of Ike's, and she answers her helm beautifully. See there!" And Carl turned her bow still further out.

"Carl, you will surely lose your reckoning!" cried Walter. "You ought not to do so. Ike meant you should keep that point in sight all the time you were going around it, and you ought to obey orders."

"I am obeying orders. I'm rounding that point, but according to my own judgment. Instead of sailing close to the shore I'm hauling off. That's the safest way always, unless you know the coast perfectly well."

"The North Star is away off there to the left now."

"Port, you mean."

"Well, port then. But I don't think Ike meant you should go so far out of the course."

"Bahaw, Walter! I'm as good a sailor as Ike is. The only difference is that I am not quite so well acquainted with these waters, so I keep further out. He advised me not to hug the shore for that very reason. I'm used to sailing out on the ocean, and can keep the points of the compass there as well as Ike can on this fresh-water lake."

"It's a pretty big lake, though."

"Yes, but nothing like the ocean. If I had this vessel a few miles off Old Point Comfort now, I'd show Ike a thing or two that would make his eyes stick out."

"What would you show him?"

"I'd show him something about the real science of navigation."

"Well, I suppose you know, but it seems to me that, as you are on Ike's ground, it would be better to do just as he said. There isn't a bit of land to be seen anywhere now."

"What do I care about that? I am not steering by the land."

"Well, it's getting cloudy off towards the north, and, if you don't look out, you'll lose sight of the North Star altogether."

"There are plenty of stars beside the North Star, I hope."

"Yes; but that's the one for you to steer by, and it's out of sight now. See! You can't even find the Dipper."

"I can find it when I want it, Walter; never you fear. I'm rather too old a sailor to get lost just because I can't find the Dipper—ho!"

"You are only seventeen."

"Well, what of that? I've been used to sailing vessels ever since I was eleven years old. That makes six solid years of experience. What do you think of that? It's just half of your age."

"Well, but I don't see how you can possibly know which way to go. The Dipper is out of sight and there's nothing but water all around us."

"I'm not going to steer by the Dipper. I know a dozen stars to steer by if I wanted them, but I don't. All I need to know is which way is north. Then I sail nor'west till I strike the light-house."

"But how do you know which way is north?"

"The aurora borealis is always north, isn't it?"

"Yes; but it isn't visible to-night."

"That shows how much you know about it. There it is dead ahead."

"That looks like a rift in the clouds to me. It is so faint you can scarcely see it at all."

"It's there, though, just the same, and it's sufficient for an experienced sailor. Now, I shall haul around until I get the right position for the course I'm to follow. My objective point, you see, is the light-house."

"But suppose you miss it! It's away off northwest—that's all you know about it; and the clouds are shifting so now you can't tell a thing by the stars."

"I don't want to tell anything by them. A true sailor has means of knowing things that a landsman never suspects. We'll come out all right; don't you be worried!"

Walter argued the case no further, for he had great confidence in Carl's knowledge and skill; and besides, his eyelids were beginning to grow very heavy. He battled bravely against a desire to sleep, but he was unaccustomed to being up so late, and the action of the wind also had a tendency to increase his drowsiness. He finally yielded to the inclination, and, dropping his head upon a broad seat athwart the gunwale, at the stern, fell fast asleep.

Three hours later he was awakened by Carl calling to him, and saying:

"Wake up, Walter! We're reached the light-house! Do you see that bright light yonder? I've been standing by it for half an hour or more. We are passing rapidly now, with the stiffest breeze we've had to-night, and we'll soon enter the Strait of Mackinaw. Didn't I tell you I knew what I was about? Yes, sir! When you get Carl Klocum aboard a vessel you get a fellow that knows his p's and q's!"

Walter was perfectly satisfied. The evidence of the light-house was too strong to be disputed, and he responded in tones highly complimentary to Carl's seamanship. They could plainly see that they were about to leave the lake and enter a narrower body of water, the dark outlines of whose shores were dimly visible on either hand. It was almost four o'clock, and Walter went below to wake up Samuel and James, who were to take the next watch.

Carl was immensely proud of his achievement. He told the boys he would not be afraid to sail that vessel anywhere on the great lakes, day or night.

"Why, I could sail her across the ocean without the slightest trouble!" he declared. "I don't believe Ike has any real knowledge of navigation, or his father. He told me he usually sailed by the coast line, but I just hauled off and stood boldly for deep water—there's where I'm right at home, you see—and I relied on my knowledge of the scientific principles of navigation. And I just struck that light-house as neat as a well-ordered ship, clean and taut fore and aft."

The truth was, Carl had wandered about considerably before he sighted the light-house, and for a time was almost in despair. Then he caught sight of the light in the far distance, not dead ahead but well to starboard. Accident had seemed to favor him, but he omitted to mention that little circumstance.

"You couldn't expect to do it, you know, Sam," he continued, "because you haven't had such a training as I have. So you'd better stick to the letter of your orders."

"Yes," answered Sam, dryly; "I think that's the best way."

"But it's as clear as daylight now. All you have got to do is to steer due west, keeping that southern shore just about where it is now."

"Were those Ike's orders?"

"Of course. He said due west after passing

the light-house, and you can see for yourself there's nothing else to do."

"All right!"

The morning was dark and hazy. The sun did not make its appearance, and all in the cabin slept very late. Sam's watch had ended and he was thinking of sending for Isaac, when Pat Reilly came on deck.

"Let the captain slape," he said. "O'll take the hellum for ye, Misther Porter. Is it the shtrait we're in?"

"Yes; and I expect we'll soon be through it. You had better call Ike as soon as you see Lake Michigan ahead of you."

"Indade will I, for it's not meself knows these fresh-wather lakes. Av it was Loch Foyle now, where the big ships come in for Derry, in Ould Ireland, it's not Captain Ike or his father could be tellin' me where the shoals will be."

Sam gave Pat directions how to steer and retired to the cabin. He found most of the boys awake and told them they were in the Strait of Mackinaw, and that the vessel was sailing along beautifully. Duncan then cautioned them to make no noise, so that Isaac and those who had been up during the night might not be disturbed. As the cabin was rather dark, they slept on for some time after the others had gone on deck. Finally Isaac awoke, and, looking at his watch, uttered an exclamation that aroused Carl and Walter.

"Something must be the matter with my watch," he said. "Look at yours, Slocum, and see what time it is."

"Ten minutes to nine."

"What! Then I must have overslept. Why in the world didn't they call me?"

"I suppose there wasn't any need of it. We got along splendidly while I was on duty. We passed the light-house a little before four this morning."

"Then we must be nearing Lake Michigan if there's been any kind of a breeze."

"There was a fine breeze when I came below."

Isaac hurried on deck, followed by Walter and Carl. He gave one quick glance around, and a surprised and puzzled expression came over his face.

"Do you call this the Strait of Mackinaw?" he asked of Carl.

"Why, of course. What else could it be?"

"I don't know what it is, but it ain't the strait, that's certain."

Carl's countenance fell. The wind, to use a common expression, was taken completely out of his sails. He had gone far out of the course and brought the vessel into strange waters, where Isaac himself seemed to be at a loss to know their whereabouts.

"I don't see how there can be any mistake," he pleaded. "I passed the light you told me about. How could that be if I went wrong?"

"Don't you s'pose there's more than one light-house on Lake Huron? You didn't follow my directions, that's the trouble."

"I only hauled off the land because I didn't

know the coast, and you advised me not to hug the shore."

"I gave you your orders," answered Isaac, sharply. "I told you to return to the course after rounding the point. I meant you should keep the land in sight all the time, or if it got too dark to see it, you was to steer by the North Star. You'd have been all right if you'd done as I said. It's a mercy you didn't wreck the vessel somewhere, coming into a strange place like this and not knowing where you was heading to."

"I don't think Carl would have done that!" cried Walter, who was disposed to stand up in his defence; "for he kept as far away from the land as he could. After we sailed off to round the point we went right away from it, and it seemed to me all the time that we were going straight across the lake."

"That's what you've done!" exclaimed Isaac. "Before you hauled off you was sailing nor'-west, and then you changed your course to nor'-east. The general coast line falls away to west'ard along there, and, when you sailed out into the lake, you was getting a good deal further away from it than you thought."

"But I brought her 'round to port after that."

"Yes; and that headed you due north, so you crossed the lake and sighted the wrong light. If that's the case that land over there must be St. Joseph's Island. Let me see!" And Isaac went for his field glass. In a moment he returned and scanned the shore carefully. "Yes, that's St. Joseph's, and there's Munusco Bay opposite. We're within easy sail of Lake Superior!"

The boys all felt sorry for Carl, but there was a ludicrous aspect to the case that appealed too strongly to their sensibilities to be entirely resisted.

"Carl wanted to catch a few whitefish in Lake Superior," laughed Will.

"Better send a memorial to Congress asking them to grant him a medal," drawled Ransom.

"Come, boys, spare your comrade," interposed Duncan, who had been a silent listener to the conversation. "Carl feels badly about his mistake, and you ought not to add to his pain. His fault has been an error of the head and not of the heart. He meant it for good, but he relied upon his own judgment when he should have followed Isaac's instructions to the letter. Of course he will expect to vacate his office, for obedience is the first qualification we require in the officers and crew of our vessel. Now we will let the matter drop, for we must decide what is best to be done."

### CHAPTER III.

"WE'VE come upwards of sixty miles out of our course, I calculate, and it'll put us back three or four days if this wind stays where it is, for, when we 'bout ship, we'll have it dead ahead."

Isaac made this statement in reply to a question of Duncan, who was deliberating in his mind whether it would be better to retrace their steps or go on, as had been proposed, and have a view of Lake Superior, waiting for a favorable wind to return.

"Well, boys," said Duncan, "I am willing to abide by your decision; but, if we go on, how about the World's Fair?"

"We can see that later, when the wind changes," replied Frank. "There's plenty of time, and I don't believe in trying to beat against a head wind. It's a sheer waste of time and altogether tedious and unenjoyable. Sail with the wind, say I! That's what Slocum did last night, and he made a famous sail!"

"Yes," answered Marshall, "and he took us sixty miles out of our way."

"And sixty miles nearer the famous fishing grounds of Lake Superior," added Henry. "For my part, I'd ten times rather go fishing up there than see all the big fairs in the universe. But we can do both. You don't object to a little fishing, I know, Marsh."

"Oh, I'm agreeable; if it's to be a fishing trip, let's have it," Marshall replied.

"That's what I say, too," said Richard. "It would be a pity not to improve so good a chance."

"I move that the World's Fair be postponed one week!" cried Will.

"Better consult the authorities about that," responded Ransom, in his usual sententious manner.

"Rans, your joke is 'dry-as-dust.' Can't you give us something a little more moist and lively?" laughed Will.

"Dr. Dryasdust needs lubricating," answered Frank. "He has vegetated too long among the dusty folios of his antiquarian library."

"Then let's give him a little fishing!" cried Henry.

"Are there good fishing grounds reasonably near?" asked Duncan of Isaac.

"Yes; there's a snug little harbor and good anchorage not very far out of White Fish Bay where I've been several times, and I never seen better fishing."

"Then we'll go there if you wish, boys," said Duncan. "Probably on our return we can make our intended trip to Chicago under more favorable circumstances."

The prospect of fine sport fishing in Lake Superior now took possession of them all, and they began to discuss the capacity of the row-boat that Isaac was towing, which would be brought into use as soon as the fishing grounds should be reached. But, when they went to the stern of the vessel to examine it, they found it gone! The knot by which it had been tied had evidently worked loose, for the towline was also gone.

This cast a damper upon their ardor for awhile, and recalled a little episode that had occurred the evening before, which for a time had occasioned no little excitement. Marshall and Thomas had stolen away in the darkness and climbed over the stern into the boat, where they

remained for a long time enjoying the alarm their absence created in the vessel. When at last their whereabouts was discovered, the boat had to be drawn up alongside in order to get them safely on deck. Duncan then handed the towline to some of the boys, telling them to tie it securely to the gunwale at the stern again, and turned to administer a rebuke to the two offenders for their foolish and perilous escapade. In the excitement of the rescue Marshall had forgotten his cardigan jacket and Thomas his straw hat, which articles they had taken off in the boat. Nothing more had been thought of the occurrence until it was discovered that the boat was gone, as just related.

An outcry was raised immediately, and a sharp discussion arose as to who was responsible for the loss, and whether or not the boat might be recovered by turning about and retracing their steps. Finally, the dispute having grown very animated and warm, Isaac stepped forward and interfered.

"I'm sorry to lose the yawl, of course," he said, "but I don't blame anybody for the loss. As to finding her now, that's out of the question. She ain't drifting astern of us, 'cause the current would probably take her towards the strait, and there's been plenty of vessels to pick her up before now; so it ain't no use to 'bout ship on account of the boat."

This little speech settled the question and the incident was soon forgotten.

It was night when they reached the canal by which the rapids of Sault Ste. Marie are passed, and the boys were all asleep in the cabin when the vessel was taken through the locks. A fine breeze carried them rapidly on into the bay, and by nine o'clock in the morning they sighted White Fish Point, and saw spread before them the broad expanse of Lake Superior. None of them excepting Isaac had ever seen its proud waters before, and, full of enthusiasm, like discoverers traversing unknown seas, they gave three hearty cheers to signalize so important an event.

But three hours more wrought a great change in their spirits. By noon Isaac's face began to wear an anxious look. There were signs of a gathering storm. He knew that in Lake Superior immense waves, threatening the safety of the stanchest vessels, sometimes arise with alarming rapidity, and he naturally viewed with apprehension the very first indications of a tempest. He would have turned back, but they had gone too far. They were at least ten miles from land at the nearest point, and, even if they could reach it before the storm overtook them, he was not sufficiently acquainted with the coast to be sure of finding a harbor nearer than the one to which he was steering. To approach the shore under such circumstances would be very dangerous. The question that now agitated him was, could he reach his harbor in time? It grew more doubtful every moment. He scanned the horizon repeatedly in search of some ray of hope, but signs of the oncoming tempest multiplied rapidly on every hand. He was finally forced to the conclusion that there

was nothing to do but shorten sail and run dead before the wind, in the hope that they might thus ride out the storm. This he accordingly prepared to do.

His first commands, uttered in quick succession, startled the boys into instant activity: "Lower the fore and mains'ls! Reilly, take hold here at the mains'! Port your helm, Mr. Porter, and bring her 'round before the wind! Mr. Slocum, lend a hand forward there and show the boys what to do! Jump lively, lads; there's no time to lose!"

Carl now proved himself to be a most efficient helper. He displayed great coolness, and his knowledge of all the details enabled him so to direct the movements in the forward part of the vessel as to prevent confusion and secure a prompt execution of the orders.

Meanwhile the storm swept towards them with terrific rapidity, its distant roar increasing in volume every instant. Isaac now determined to close reef everything and scud under bare poles. This was done not a moment too soon. The heavens grew black, darkening the air as though night were suddenly dropping upon them. The wind, roaring louder and louder, increased in velocity until it blew a perfect gale. The dark waves rolled every instant higher, their crests white with foam, as if some demon were lashing them into fury. The heavy rolling of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning followed each other in quick succession, and for a few brief moments the boys were almost paralyzed by the awful sublimity of the scene.

Isaac detailed five for duty on deck, including Duncan, who insisted upon taking a share of the labor, and sent the others below. Duncan was posted at the bow as lookout, and two others were placed at points between him and the wheel to facilitate the transmission of orders. Two more were stationed at the wheel, and all were lashed to their several positions to prevent their being washed overboard. Isaac tied a rope around his own waist, fastening the other end to the mainmast, so that he could move about safely as occasion might require.

As these preparations went forward the fury of the storm increased. The vessel plunged more and more heavily, and it seemed as if the dreadful tempest was carrying them forward over the mighty billows with terrific speed. The great waves rushed over the deck at every plunge, and it was fortunate that Isaac had taken the precaution to lash his men to their places, for, wet to the skin and benumbed with cold, they were scarcely able to take care of themselves. All day the storm raged with unabated fury. The night brought no abatement, and Isaac began to fear they might be driven on some rocky beach or island, for, judging by the fierce velocity of the wind, he thought they must have traveled a great distance. He cautioned Duncan again and again to keep a sharp lookout. Duncan strained his eyes to the utmost to see through the flying spray into the darkness, but, as hour after hour went by, he could distinguish nothing but the foaming sea before him.

Just before daybreak, when the darkness of

night is said to be most intense, as he was about to call out for the twentieth time that all was well, the dark space into which he was gazing seemed suddenly to grow darker still, as though an immense black cloud had dropped out of the sky. He shouted in startled tones that were heard even at the wheel amid the roaring of the elements:

"Land ho!"

"Where away?" Isaac instantly shouted back.

"Dead ahead, and on the starboard bow!"

But before any change could be made in the course of the vessel, her bow rose upon a mighty wave, and, descending the next instant, struck a rock with such tremendous force that she shivered from stem to stern. The boys in the cabin all rushed pellmell on deck, thinking the schooner was going to pieces. Isaac, with his usual thoughtfulness, ran from one to another of those on duty, cutting the cords that held them in their places and telling them to hold on till he gave them the word.

But the schooner was not damaged as badly as they thought. She rose upon another great wave and was carried forward again with tremendous force, this time crashing in among the trees and bushes of the shore, splintering her bowsprit and foremast, but otherwise suffering no further damage. She trembled an instant on her keel, and, careening to starboard, rested against a thick growth of trees.

"Jump, boys, for your lives!" shouted Duncan; and Isaac cried:

"Over the bow! over the bow! Not here—you'll be swept away!"

All sprang forward at once, and, regardless of all danger of sprained ankles and broken limbs, jumped to the ground, Duncan and Isaac being the last to leave the deck. When it was found that none of them were missing, Duncan exclaimed fervently:

"Thank God! Our lives are spared at least!"

But Isaac now perceived another danger. The schooner was every moment violently shaken by fierce billows that beat over her stern, and, fearing she might be moved from her position by some receding wave and carried out beyond their reach, he shouted:

"The anchor! Help me with the anchor, quick!"

With the help of the trees he climbed into the vessel again, followed by Richard and Carl. They threw out the anchor, and Duncan, with the help of several ready hands, hooked it securely around the butt of a stout tree. This done, the whole party, soaked to the skin and shivering with cold, stood thinking sadly of the wreck of their vessel and of all their bright anticipations.

#### CHAPTER IV.

IT SEEMED as though the boys had been driven ashore by the very last stroke of the tempest's fury. They had scarcely time to look about them before its dreadful roar began to recede in the distance. As daylight in-

creased and the tumult of the elements subsided, there came to them, weary and wretched as they were, a joyous feeling of relief from the terrible strain of the previous sixteen hours; and, when Duncan asked them to kneel down with him and return thanks for their marvelous escape, they all fell instantly upon their knees in the wet sand and grass, joining audibly in the Lord's Prayer and responding fervently to the thanksgiving he offered.

Great waves were still coming in, but, no

effects. Pat, meanwhile, in the capacity of cook, devoted his energies to the preparation of breakfast; but his efforts to build a fire were attended with no little difficulty, owing to the fact that he could find nothing but wet material.

"Arrah!" he exclaimed; "a wet counthry is it, wid iverything saturated wid wather that cannot be bate for wetness! Av it had but a little illiment of dhriness about it now, it's me-self could give yez an illegant cup of coffee that would warrum your chists and revive your



All hands now went to work unloading their effects.

longer agitated by the violence of the wind, they became more and more sluggish in their action, until their fierce rolling had given place to the indolent beating of a heavy surf.

It was found that the stern of the vessel rested upon a ridge of sand and rock, separated from the shore by a few feet of sand and water, and that the hold, in which the supplies were stored, had scarcely any water in it. When this discovery was made the spirits of the boys greatly revived, for, had their food supply been spoiled, the hardships of their situation would have been tenfold greater.

All hands now went to work unloading their

spirits; but indade the fire itself is about as wet as the wather."

But perseverance overcomes all obstacles, and, by the time the vessel was unloaded and the tent put up, Pat had his cup of coffee made and announced that breakfast was ready. All, excepting Isaac and Frank, who lingered at the schooner, now gathered around the most inviting meal they had partaken of in many a day.

Isaac, accompanied by Frank, was carefully examining the condition of his vessel.

"Well, Ike, what's the verdict?" asked the latter, as Isaac crawled out of the hole made by the rock in her bottom.



"Bad enough!" Isaac responded, his eyes filling with tears. "There lays every dollar I've earned in all my life."

"Can't we fix her up? It seems to me a break like that could be easily repaired, and you said you had a kit of tools aboard."

"Yes, I've got my own and Doc Chipman's, too. The cabin wasn't finished inside, and we left 'em there; and the paint for the last coat's in there, too. That's why her name ain't on her anywhere. Yes, I've got tools enough, but that ain't the trouble. Five of her ribs are broke, and all this part of the vessel has got to come out. That can't be done where she lays; and, if it could, it wouldn't do any good, for we could never get her afloat again. Here she lays a hundred foot or more from deep water, and there ain't force enough in this crowd to move her a peg!"

"You don't mean to say it's a dead tuck, Ike! There must be something we can do."

"There's only one thing to be done."

"What is that?"

"Take her to pieces and rebuild her."

"Can you do that?"

"Yes, with some help. I can build stocks out of some of these trees easy enough, and, if some of you fellows'll turn in and help me with the heavy work, I believe I can have her afloat in two or three months."

"Ike, that's a grand idea!" exclaimed Frank, enthusiastically. "You'll have my help, anyhow, and Dick Stockland's, too, I guess. We're both handy with tools—he is, especially. Last year at college we built a boat together, and we named her after a young lady friend of his. The only trouble with her was, she was a little clumsy and one-sided—not the girl, you know, but the boat! You just be easy, Ike. I believe it'll all come out right. You've wrecked your vessel in our service and on our account, and we'd be a pack of selfish knaves if we wouldn't stand by you and help you out of your difficulty. I can't answer for the other fellows, of course, but they've got the right sort of stuff in them. Dick has, I know—and Duncan will do the right thing, too—you see if he don't!"

"I thank you, Burton, with all my heart for your kind offer," Isaac replied, earnestly, "and I feel sure we shall save the vessel. But I guess you've agreed to help in a bigger job than you think."

"The size of the job hasn't anything to do with the matter, according to my idea; for I think it would be a mean trick for us to desert you in such a predicament as this."

"All right!" answered Isaac, greatly cheered by this friendly assurance. "Then let's go and get some breakfast, for I know you need it, and we'll see what can be done, afterwards."

They found the boys noisily discussing the situation. Where had the storm driven them? That was the question all were asking, but none could answer. Isaac was asked his opinion, and said he thought the general direction of the storm was northwest, although it had shifted its course somewhat during the night.

"I rather think," he added, "that we're on a

small peninsula right here, for we can see a point of land about a quarter of a mile to the eastward of us, and the water looks to me as if it might be an inlet to a bay."

"It is," answered Duncan: "for, while the boys were putting up the tent, I went on a little tour of discovery. There is a small bay lying north of us about half a mile in width. I could see the opposite shore and what looked like two arms of the bay extending east and west. They may be the mouths of rivers, but from this distance I could see no signs of a current. But we are not on a peninsula just here. We have been wrecked on a little island not more than an eighth of a mile across, separated from the shore on the west by two or three hundred feet of deep water."

"Don't you think the mainland back of us is a part of the northern shore of Lake Superior?" asked Richard.

"I should think it very likely," Duncan replied.

"Then if that's the case," said Henry, "there are plenty of bears and Indians about here. I must see that my rifle is in good order, for we may have an encounter before many days."

"I hardly think we have anything to fear from Indians, Henry," answered Duncan.

"But I say, fellows!" exclaimed Marshall, "if we're on the northern shore of the lake—and I haven't the slightest doubt of it myself—we can get out of this scrape very easily. All we have to do is to tramp twenty or thirty miles and we'll strike the Canadian Pacific railroad. According to the map it doesn't run very far from the northern shore of Lake Superior."

"That's a fact," echoed Tom, "and I say let's start to-morrow. What's the use of our staying here? We can walk the distance in a couple of days and get home in a week."

"What's the use of our staying here?" repeated Richard. "What was the use of our going camping at all? If it's going to be so easy to get home we might as well stay here awhile and have a little fun first. You must remember that when we get home our trip will be ended for the season—at least mine will be—and I didn't start out intending to go right straight back again."

"Never you fear, Dick," responded Will. "My opinion is, there's no danger of our going back home in a hurry."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Marshall. "Don't you think we can go home when we want to?"

"That depends on circumstances. We don't know where we are yet. Didn't you ever read Robinson Crusoe or Swiss Family Robinson?"

"Of course; but what have they to do with it?"

"Oh, not much; only, they didn't go straight back home again, did they?"

"No; but they are supposed to have been thousands of miles from land."

"And fifty miles are about as bad as a thousand if you have no boat," replied Will. "Suppose we should discover that mainland over there to be an island?"

"But what reason is there to think so?" asked Henry.

"Well, I think there is some reason to think so, for Sam Porter and I went down on the point to cut some poles to roll the barrels down on, and we could see the broad, open lake far to the east and some distance towards the north-east, too."

The boys began to look serious. They fully realized that to read entertaining stories of shipwreck was a very different thing from the reality; and the probability of their being on an island miles from the mainland, with no means of traversing the distance, struck them very unpleasantly.

At this point, Isaac, after hastily swallowing his coffee, went back to the schooner.

Frank Burton, who had been watching for an opportunity to speak his mind, now burst out in a characteristic speech:

"Come, fellows, what's the use of looking glum! I'd like to get out of this scrape, myself. I'd like to go home to-night and sleep in my little trundle-bed! Everything about the old place seems especially lovely to me just now, even the old cellar with its musty darkness, where I have spent many a weary hour sprouting potatoes. The tallow candle that used to share my solitude and labors resolves itself into a thing of celestial beauty, and I would give worlds for the privilege of snuffing that candle with my fingers once more! As for the old 'cow with the crumpled horn' that I used to be-labor with the milking stool because she wouldn't stand still—why, she has risen immensely in my estimation all of a sudden! I could shed tears, my brothers, for a sight of that cow! I could weep because I can't have her kick over the milk in my lap this morning, according to her time-honored custom. But my intention is to submit with a good grace to the sore deprivation. My resolution is formed. My purpose is to stop milking cows and sprouting potatoes for awhile and turn shipbuilder. I intend to help Ike rebuild his vessel. Here you are, all brooding over the pickle you're in, and forgetting that Ike is in a far worse pickle than you are. You forget that his schooner is wrecked, and that with it has gone every dollar he ever earned. You forget that he has lost her in your service, and that you are bound to do all you can to relieve his distress. Now, he tells me he can take her to pieces, build some stocks and put her together again, but it will take considerable time and he'll need our help. If we don't give it he's a ruined man. I've told him he can depend on me for one. You may glower over the situation as much as you want to, but as for me—"

"Give me liberty or give me death!" interrupted Will.

"No," resumed Frank; "but I do say give me an honest man. Give me half a dozen fellows that have got the right sort of stuff in them, and we'll set that schooner afloat again as honest men should. So it don't make any difference to me whether that land over yonder is an island or a continent. I stay here with

Ike, for we don't propose to give up the ship. 'We'll fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.'"

A brief silence followed. Each seemed to be occupied with his own thoughts. Frank had introduced a subject which many of the boys felt deserved their serious attention. Duncan said nothing, for he was waiting to hear what the others had to say before expressing his own opinion. Presently Richard broke the silence, saying:

"Boys, I think Frank is right. We do owe something to Ike in this trouble that we have got him into, and I propose that we all stand by him and not leave this place, whether it proves to be the mainland or not, till we can sail away in his vessel."

"Sound doctrine, Dick!" drawled Ransom, who with a bag of corn for a pillow had stretched himself on a blanket by the fire.

"But Ike was as ready to sail into Lake Superior as any of us," cried Marshall.

"That's so," said Tom. "He seemed to want to come."

"What difference does that make?" answered Richard. "The point is that he has lost his vessel in our service, and although he may have no legal claim on us, we are yet bound by a moral obligation to do all we can to help him. He is the greatest sufferer by this wreck, and that's enough for me. We have only lost a little of our fun, but he has lost what is everything to him—his schooner and his living. The more I think about it, the more I am determined to stick by him and help him out."

"Hurrah, Dick!" cried Frank. "I knew you'd do the square thing. We'll never 'give up the ship,' sink or swim!"

"But if Ike wanted to come as much as any of us, I don't see where the moral obligation comes in," said Tom.

"But he didn't," answered Frank. "He simply did as we told him—never said a word one way or the other, though if he had it wouldn't make any difference, as Dick says. It was I who proposed to sail with the wind, and then all agreed and Ike shaped his course accordingly."

"Well, you've got enough sailing with the wind, I guess," remarked Marshall moodily.

"'Twasn't the sailing that was the trouble—it was the way we landed," laughed Will.

"That's a fact—it wasn't," replied Frank. "We landed high and dry—"

"Och, not dhry, Misther Frank!" interrupted Pat.

"I accept the amendment—high and wet, I should have said. But to return to the subject of the vessel, I'd like to have an expression of opinion from some of you silent chaps. Why don't you speak out and let us know which side of the fence you're on, unless you are trying to straddle it?"

"Because we agree with you—at least I do," answered Carl.

"Yes; we stand by the ship," cried several at once.

"And I heartily agree with you, boys," said Duncan. "I am sure Marshall and Thomas will cheerfully yield to the views of so large a majority. The loss of Isaac's vessel is certainly our greatest calamity. The fact that he has lost it in our service has been in my mind all the morning, and I have been greatly perplexed to know what we could do about it. I am delighted to find you have solved the question."

"Three cheers for Duncan!" cried Frank, who tossed his hat up in the air and began to hurrah lustily.

The boys gave three hearty cheers for Duncan, then for Isaac, and finally for "The Venture," which they proposed to devote their best energies to setting afloat again. They now had an object before them worthy of their ambition, and their spirits rose accordingly.

#### CHAPTER V.

66 **I**NDADE it's meself will shtand by Captain Ike in his distress. He's a gentleman, and it's loike a gentleman he has been afther tr'atin' me. Och! but av it was Loch Foyle we'd ben wrecked on now, instead of this b'astly fresh wather lake, it's run across the counthry I would the mornin' and have a chat wid Biddy O'Donohue before breakfast—I would that same. And it's Biddy would say to me, says she, 'It's a haro ye be, Patrick me jewel, for gettin' wrecked on the rocks and standin' by your captain wid your brawny arrum in his hour of nade!' It's Biddy would say that same, wid a smile on her mou't as swate as a molasses tub. But bad luck to it! It's not on Loch Foyle we are, but in the fresh wather say that she'll niver imagine is bigger than a frog pond, and niver a worrud will she belave of me haroism!"

Thus Pat soliloquized, as he gathered together the embers of last night's fire and replenished them with new material, preparatory to cooking the morning meal. He was not aware that William Staples, who had just come out of the tent, stood watching him and accidentally overheard his remarks.

"Never mind, Pat," he said, laughing; "Biddy will hear of your exploit sometime, I dare say, and applaud you generously, as any loving damsel should. But tell me something of this Biddy of yours. Is she handsome? Is her smile really as sweet as a molasses tub?"

"Not for the loikes of you, Misther Shtaples, mind that."

"Oh, I suppose not, of course; but for you, I mean."

"Whisht! Away wid your nonsense! I was but givin' flight to me imagination a way bit."

"Then Miss Biddy is a myth, is she?"

"She's a myth of an hundred and seventy pound avoirdupois, or thereabouts."

"Ah, Pat, you're a riddle. Nobody can make much out of you. I'm afraid."

"Shure, it's not yourself can do it, Misther Shtaples; so be wise and kape your nonsense in your own chist!"

"Sound advice, and he needs it, Pat," yawned Ransom, coming out of the tent and sitting down on a log to complete his toilet; "sound advice, and it's to be hoped the youth will take it seriously to heart. Been trying his steel on you this time, I suppose—it's a vicious habit of his."

"I've only been quizzing him a little," laughed Will, "and if he isn't offended, I'm willing to shake hands and call it square."

"Offended!" cried Pat. "Arrah! it's not meself gits offended wid a defated antagonist."

"So Will has met his match for once!" said Ransom. "Glad to hear it—deserves his defeat. But what are you going to give us for breakfast, Pat? Feel as though I could eat a mule."

"Roast potatoes, ham and coffee."

"Very good, considering the hotel we're stopping at; but why not fry a few of those chickens?"

"Because some o' thim pullets is beginnin' to lay eggs."

"Oho! So you're going into the poultry business? A good idea; only transportation is not of the best just now, and as for a market, *non est inventus*—if you know what that means."

"Indade do I. It manes that niver a bit of throuble will there be to dispose of all the eggs and poultry can be raked and scraped, as long as Misther Ransom Shtorey is takin' his males along wid us. It's himself can invent us a market as aisy as sittin' on a log."

Thus the conversation proceeded until the boys had all made their appearance. Pat had now a roaring fire, and many of them gathered around it, enjoying its warmth in the cool morning air, while they awaited their turns to use the wash basins, which only three of their number had been thoughtful enough to bring.

Two or three had gone down to the shore to wash, but it was some little distance, and most of them preferred to remain by the fire, among whom were Frank and Carl, who stood together waiting for Henry to complete his ablutions.

"I never saw a fellow take so long to wash his face as Buster does in all my life," remarked Carl impatiently. "He's been at it for the last half hour, and has used up a whole bucket full of water, I do believe. Just look at him! He's equal to a war vessel of three thousand tons displacement!"

"And he shows no signs of getting through," returned Frank. "He must be solving the problem of perpetual motion! He snuffs and blows away like a spaniel swimming after a stick. There! He's sousing his head in all over now—you'll see him shake himself in a minute when he comes out!"

"What's that you are saying?" cried Henry, who, with his eyes closed and his face dripping with water, now began to feel about for a towel. "Who is it that's going to shake himself?"

"You; before you go out to fight the bears and Indians!" replied Frank.

"When are you going to start, Buster?"

asked Walter. "We'd like some bear's meat to save our poultry. Pat says the pullets are laying eggs, and Willie and I want to save them up and hatch some chickens."

"He can't go till the raft is built," said Richard.

"The raft? Are you going to build a raft?"

"Yes. That's what's the matter with Frank and Carl—they're in such a hurry to get about it."

"We're going to send an exploring expedition over to the mainland," added Carl.

"An exploring expedition, did you say?" asked Henry, who had reached the final stage of his ablutions and was vigorously scrubbing his face with a towel.

"Yes," answered Richard; "Duncan said he was going to take one over. He and Ike are talking it over now, I guess."

Duncan and Isaac now came out of the tent, and after much discussion, all the boys being anxious to go with the expedition, it was decided that Richard, Frank, Henry and Carl should accompany them.

After breakfast, work was begun on the raft. Six large logs were cut about fourteen feet in length, into which cross pieces were mortised at intervals of about two feet and fastened with oak pins driven into auger holes, thus binding them firmly together. Stout, heavy stakes, fourteen inches in height, were fastened in a similar manner along the outer edge and across the stern, upon which a heavy rail was fitted to support the oars, two pairs of which, belonging to the yawl, had been saved in the schooner.

It was noon before the rude vessel was placed on the water. Isaac added Pat to his crew as an expert oarsman, and taking another oar himself, placed Carl at the stern to steer.

Crossing the narrows, they rowed along the shore into the bay and landed on a sandy beach half a mile from the little island. They found that the western arm of the bay, which Duncan had seen the day before, was not the mouth of a stream as he conjectured, but a perfectly placid sheet of water of no great depth. Following it around to the north side, they stopped to reconnoiter.

A short distance northwest of the head of this little bay they came to a bluff varying in height from fifteen to twenty feet, and extending on either hand as far as the eye could see. At the point where they first approached it a solid, perpendicular rock rose above their heads like a gigantic step. Everywhere else the bluff was covered with a thick growth of trees and bushes.

Duncan stopped under the wall of rock and looked around.

"This is a charming spot," he said. "How beautifully the water glistens in the bay yonder, as we view it from this point through the scattering trees! I do not believe we shall find a better place for our camp. This bluff shuts off the wind completely from the north and west. What do you say, boys—can we do better?"

"This will do for the camp first-rate," Isaac

replied; "but I must find a good place to launch the vessel somewhere about here. It'll have to be on the big bay yonder, for the water in this little one is too shallow. Suppose we follow the shore a little further to the eastward."

They accordingly returned to the bay, and after proceeding about half a mile in the direction indicated, Isaac found the place he was looking for. They then continued on in the same direction, following the curvings of the shore until they came to the mouth of a little stream that flowed into another small bay, forming the eastern arm that Duncan had seen the day before.

As they approached the bank of the creek a dark animal, two feet or more in length, suddenly plunged into the water and swam for the opposite side. In an instant the crack of Henry's rifle rang through the woods, the water became stained with blood and the animal sank, struggling, out of sight.

"What is it?" asked the boys almost in a breath, crowding around the spot and gazing eagerly into the water.

"It's an otter," said Isaac, "and a big one. I don't believe I've ever seen so big a one before."

"Perhaps that's because they're not hunted here much and they have a chance to grow large and fat," remarked Richard.

"I suppose so," responded Henry; "but I wish he'd come up, for I should like to know whether he is dead or not."

"Well, you hit him, whether you killed him or not," said Richard.

"Oh, I don't often miss," replied Henry carelessly. "I'll come over here again some day and make sure of a few of those fellows—they must be thick about here."

"I presume they are; but what are they good for?" asked Carl.

"Why, don't you know?" asked Frank. "Their fur is valuable; and they are good to eat, aren't they, Duncan?"

"My impression is that they are not held in very high repute for the table," answered Duncan.

"I'll ask Rans. I'll bet you he knows all about it," said Henry.

"Such is fame!" laughed Frank. "Dr. Dryasdust has a reputation, and so Buster thinks he must know all about otters as well as Latin and Greek."

"Well, now, I'll tell you one thing—I never heard of any subject ever being brought up that Rans Storey didn't know all about," answered Henry emphatically.

"Well, to change the subject," said Frank, "I think your otter has vamoosed the ranch, Buster, and we had better go on to other scenes of conquest."

They now followed the bank of the stream, and in a few moments began to hear the sound of rushing water, like the noise of a distant waterfall. They soon came to a bluff which they recognized as a continuation of the one they had seen before, and over a broad rock embedded in its side the creek fell in one sheet

of sparkling water, making a descent of twenty feet or more.

They stood silently admiring the pretty scene. The water was as clear as crystal and the spray glistened beautifully in the sunlight, as its rays glanced through the opening in the forest made by the foaming little torrent.

"Well," said Richard, "I guess this waterfall settles the question."

"What question?" asked Carl.

"As to whether this is an island or not—unless it's a large one; for such a stream and falls could hardly be found on a small one."

"But streams are sometimes made up of

tunity to exercise your inventive faculties in bestowing appropriate names."

"And immortalize yourselves!" added Frank.

"Yes," answered Richard; "like the discoverers of the lakes and rivers of this continent three centuries ago. I think it's fun to explore a new country. Come on! Let's see what there is above this ridge."

They climbed the terrace, and crossing the creek on a fallen tree, followed the ridge until they came out on a low bluff overlooking the lake toward the north and east. Here they beheld once more the vast waste of waters.

They then followed the coast northwest. The

ground rose gradually as they proceeded, and after walking about three-quarters of a mile they found themselves on a high point of land looking directly towards the north, and here again nothing met the eye but a broad expanse of water.

"This is 'Rock Point,'" said Henry. "My! See the rocks down there in the water! I don't think we can find any other name for this place."

"Quite right, Buster," answered Frank. "Now it is your turn, Ike. Give us a name for that big rock that stands out there all alone—off towards the west."

"Yes, I was looking at it and thinking what a terrible place for a vessel to be drove on to in a storm."

"Well, name the rock!"

"Do you think we will need

a name for that? All right if you do. I'll call it 'Lone Rock.'"

From this point the shore line receded abruptly to the southwest, and the boys became convinced that they were on an island; but to ascertain for a certainty, they continued to follow the height half an hour longer. They then left the lake and directed their course southward.

In a short time they came upon a number of springs, each having an outlet in a brook, which they concluded must flow into the creek from the springs forming its original source, as Duncan had suggested. Crossing one of these little streams, they began to ascend what proved to be the highest part of the island. On reaching a rocky eminence where they discovered another and larger spring, Carl proposed to climb a tree in order to get a more extended view towards the west. In a few moments he sang out from one of the topmost branches of a tall tree:

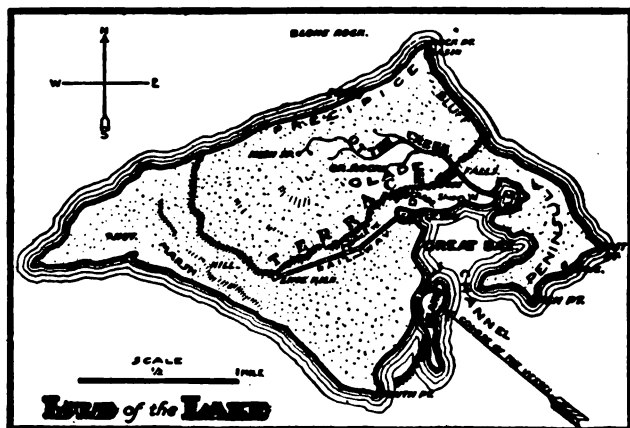
"Shipmates, ahoy!"

"Well, what do you see?" shouted Duncan.

"Open sea towards the west and south."

"Is there any land in sight in any direction?"

"No land and no sail. All is as clean and



springs, and this water is very clear and cold," replied Frank.

"Yes," said Duncan; "the water of Lake Superior itself is remarkably clear and cold on account of innumerable springs, and I do not think Richard's theory necessarily holds good always. There might be a large number of springs here which, finding a common outlet, would produce this beautiful creek. But the best way to find out is to push on and ascertain by ocular demonstration. Before we leave, however, let us give a name to this little stream. I would suggest 'Otter Creek' in commemoration of Henry's exploit."

"Agreed!" cried Frank; "and this bluff shall be called 'The Terrace.'"

"If we're going to stay here long," said Carl, "we shall need to have everything named, and I would suggest 'Great Bay,' 'East Bay' and 'Little Bay' as suitable for those bodies of water."

"And now for the little island where we were wrecked—I say, 'Shipwreck Island,'" cried Richard.

"Now," said Duncan, "we must go on. Perhaps we shall make some other discoveries; and if so, some of the rest of you will have an oppor-

neat as a ship that is scrubbed fore and aft."

Carl descended and reported that the high ground on which they were then standing fell away abruptly some distance further west, and that the western part of the island seemed to lie low and flat, narrowing to a point about two miles distant.

"So we're on an island, and a small one, in mid-lake," he added; "and now, Pat, you must give it a name, for we have all named something and we are not going to leave you out. What shall it be—Flatiron Island?"

"Aw, away wid your flatiron!" responded Pat. "Is it a flathead ye'd be thinking me? There's wan island that's the quane of the worruld, and it's called the 'Imerald Isle.' That same is a name of beauty, and av ye'll have me give a name to this wan where we've found a haven of rest from the ragin' shorrums, I'll call it the 'Isle of the Lake.' That same'll slip along the tongue wid the aise of an oyster; but 'Flatiron'!—bah! Would ye be chokin' yourself wid a name loike that?"

"Pat, you've won the belt!" exclaimed Frank. "The 'Isle of the Lake' it shall be. What a pity you weren't along when some of the jaw-breakers in our geographies were adopted! I am confident you would have saved Young America many an hour of discouragement and heartache."

"Yes," said Duncan, "I think Patrick has won the belt. None of us, it seems, can compete with him; but nevertheless, I will venture one more modest contribution to our island nomenclature, and say that this spring where we are now standing shall be called 'High Spring.'"

As the sun was sinking very near the horizon it was decided to return to camp. On approaching an open glade that lay between them and the bay, Henry discovered a large hare bounding over the ground in front of him, and instantly all joined in the chase. Their running and shouting frightened many others out of their covers, and before many minutes five bounding hares had been shot.

Flushed by their exercise and laden with their game, they now started to cross the glade, passing near a great rock that stood alone almost in its center. Pat was thirsty, and surmising there might be a spring in the vicinity, he went in search of one, his form disappearing around the solitary rock, which towered high above his head. In a moment he reappeared with an expression of great concern depicted on his face and began to gesticulate wildly, beckoning the others to come to him in great haste.

Henry thought he had discovered a bear, and dropping everything, cocked his rifle and advanced cautiously as though he expected to meet a formidable enemy. Carl and Frank started on a run, calling out:

"What is it, Pat?"

"Whisht!" said the Irishman as they drew near; "ye'll raise a regiment of thim rascals."

"Which do you mean, Indians or bears?" asked Carl.

"Indade, it's not mæself that knows; but I

think it's more like the fut of an illiphant."

"An elephant! Ho! Pat, you're wild. There are no elephants in this latitude."

"Arrah! I'm not sayin' there be; but it's a saft fut wid no toes, whatever it'll be."

"No toes!" cried Richard, coming up. "Where did you see it? Has it crawled under the rock?" And he began to search cautiously among the bushes.

By this time the others had arrived on the scene, and Henry, with his rifle ready to fire, demanded of Pat where he had seen the enemy, while Duncan and Isaac stood by, curious to learn what had occasioned the Irishman's excitement.

"He has seen an animal with a soft foot and no toes," explained Carl, laughing, "and he thinks it may be something like an elephant."

"Niver a worruld did I say about seein' him, Misther Carl. It's his footsteps I was afther seein', and here they'll be."

He led them to a spot a few feet distant, where, in the soft, wet earth by a large spring that glistened under the rock, there were found several distinct impressions of a footstep. They were toeless, as he said, but although without the shapely form of a boot or shoe, they were evidently made by a man.

"That is the impression of a moccasin, if I am not mistaken," said Duncan.

"And what kind of an animal might that be?" asked Pat.

"It's not an animal at all, Pat," laughed Richard. "It's a sort of shoe that the Indians wear."

"Well, boys, I am afraid we have some companions on this island that will not prove to be very congenial," said Duncan.

"Indians, of course," remarked Carl.

"I am afraid so."

Henry examined his priming and carefully scanned the surrounding woods.

"But these impressions were all made by one man," declared Richard.

"That's so," said Carl; "they're all of one size and shape. Let's see if we can find any more."

They carefully examined the ground in every direction, but found only one or two slight impressions, evidently made by the same person.

"They are certainly recent footsteps made as late as yesterday, for otherwise the rain would have obliterated them," Duncan said after they had returned to the spring.

"Yes," said Frank; "but the man may not be an Indian after all. I spent a winter in Canada once, and I found that many of the French Canadians in the rural districts wore moccasins."

"Well," answered Duncan, "however that may be, we have made two important discoveries to-day. One is that we are on an island somewhere in the midst of this great lake; and the other is that while there are no signs of civilization here, the place is already inhabited, whether by one or more, Frenchman or Indian, remains to be seen."

## CHAPTER VI.

THE report of the returning explorers had a rather depressing effect upon some of the boys. The idea that they could extricate themselves from their situation at any time by walking across the country to some settlement or railroad, had helped materially to keep up their spirits. They had generously decided to remain where they were, in any event, and render Isaac all the assistance in their power, but they had indulged the hope that they could send a party to the nearest settlement to communicate with friends and perhaps obtain material and help to rebuild the vessel.

This plan had been fully discussed by the boys in camp during the absence of the explorers, and a desire to carry it out had taken so strong a hold upon the minds of many of them that they believed it could be done without the slightest difficulty.

William Staples, however, thought differently, and shortly after the explorers had gone, he led his companions to the spot where, on the previous morning, Samuel and he had seen the open lake on the east; but they all decided against him, Sam alone seeming to be doubtful, because the view in the opposite direction was shut off by the winding shore of what they called the mainland.

The wish was father to the thought, but they became so thoroughly imbued with the idea that when, a few hours later, the returning party came within easy speaking distance, Walter called out in confident tones:

"That's a peninsula over there, isn't it? How do you suppose we found out?"

"You are out of your reckoning there," answered Carl.

"Why, isn't it a peninsula?" asked Thomas.

"About as much as that Scotch cap of yours is," said Frank.

"Yes," added Richard, "just about. Perhaps your geography describes a peninsula as a body of land entirely surrounded by water, but the one I studied does not."

"Is it really an island?" asked several in tones of disappointment.

"An island, as sure as squalls in November," answered Carl as he sprang ashore; "and more than that, there is nothing but open sea at every point of the compass—not a sign of land in any direction."

"I told you so!" cried Will; "but you were all so anxious to believe we were on the mainland you wouldn't listen to me."

"What shall we do when our stores are all gone?" asked James despondently. "We can't send away for any more, and it seems to me we are in a mighty bad situation."

"Live on rabbits and fish!" answered Henry cheerfully, holding up one of the hares.

"Wait till that time comes!" added Frank. "There isn't any use being glum over what can't be helped. We won't starve in these waters, that is certain. Now let's have some supper, say I, and make ourselves comfortable for the night. We're all as hungry as bears and about as jaded as hunted deer."

This suggestion was echoed by all the returning party. During supper Duncan related all that had happened. The discovery of the mysterious footsteps occasioned no little conjecture and discussion. As a result, it was decided to have a camp guard during the night, in view of the possibility of a visit from the mysterious stranger or strangers who dwelt upon the larger island.

The night passed, however, without any disturbance, and with returning light the spirits of the boys greatly revived. It was Sunday morning. The sun rose in a cloudless sky, and the now placid waters of the lake, glancing beneath its bright rays, seemed to invite them to cheerfulness and hope.

Duncan called them together and held a service with them under the trees, and the remainder of the day was spent quietly in camp.

At midnight Carl and Frank went on guard, for it was thought best not to neglect the precaution observed the night before. One of the two was to be constantly on the watch at the narrow passage between the islands, and the entire circuit of the camp was to be made every hour. They were to be relieved at four o'clock, and as they walked the beat alternately, each would have to go around the little island twice in the course of their watch.

Frank had just returned from his first "round," when Carl met him and whispered in his ear:

"Keep perfectly still, and don't let yourself be seen! There's somebody over there watching the camp."

"Where?"

"On the beach across the narrows. Come, I'll show you."

They crept along, keeping in the shadow of the trees and carefully avoiding the crackling of twigs under their feet, until they came to a place where thick overhanging trees perfectly concealed them from observation. The sky was cloudless, and they could plainly see objects on the opposite shore, which at that point was not more than two hundred and fifty feet away. Carl pointed out a dark object standing perfectly motionless close to the water's edge. His whole form could be seen distinctly outlined on the sandy beach, which extended back a hundred feet or more, rising gradually until it terminated in a dark fringe of trees and bushes.

"That looks like a post," whispered Frank.

"But it's a man, for I saw him come out of the woods."

"What part of the woods did he come out of?"

"Up towards the bay. He crossed the beach diagonally."

"Did he seem to come boldly, or sneak along like a thief?"

"He sneaked; that is, he kept stopping every few steps as though he didn't want to be seen."

"I wish we had a glass, Carl."

"I'll go and get Ike's. I know where it is, but it isn't a night glass."

"No, but it'll bring an object nearer. At least, we can try it. But see here, Carl—that

fellow is probably watching the camp very closely. You mustn't let a rag of yourself be seen."

"I'll look out for that."

So saying, Carl sped away and in a few minutes returned with the glass, through which he looked intently at the man for several seconds.

"Can you see him any better?" asked Frank.

"It brings him nearer, but I can't see him any more distinctly. I can't make out how he's dressed or anything. I think he's an Indian, though."

"Why?"

"Because he's as motionless as a statue. No white man ever stands as still as that."

"One might; but let me see."

Frank took the glass, and after looking through it a moment, exclaimed:

"There, he's shouldering his rifle! I can see the movements of his arms and legs. He seems to be doing something with his feet. It can't be he's executing a war dance! Oh, I guess he's shoving his feet around to obliterate his foot-steps; and that is just what he is doing, the cunning rascal!"

"Probably he knows we discovered his tracks at the great rock, Saturday."

"Very likely."

"I shouldn't wonder if he saw us then. He was probably sneaking somewhere in the woods, watching us."

"Yes, I presume he was."

"Don't you think he's an Indian?"

"I rather guess he is. He acts like one to me."

"And he is armed, evidently. I think he is a scout sent out to watch us. Probably there'll be a whole squadron of them bearing down on us one of these days."

"A squadron! Pshaw, Carl! I think you rather overdo it."

"Overdo what?"

"Your nautical phraseology. Do you imagine we are engaged in naval warfare?"

"No, but I have a sailor's instinct, and nautical language seems a sort of second nature to me. I expect I'll follow the sea."

"I don't. You'll be more likely to turn out a druggist or an insurance agent."

"Why?"

"Oh, because people don't generally do what they expect to. I knew a fellow once that was always painting pictures, and everybody said he was going to be a great artist; but he's a street-car conductor now."

"I presume his pictures were mere daubs."

"Very likely. Still, he didn't do what he expected to."

"Well, I mean to, anyhow. But what is that fellow doing now?"

"Nothing. Now he is, though—he has dropped down on all fours. I wonder if he's going to swim across."

"I shouldn't wonder. He probably thinks we're all asleep, and he'll have a good chance to examine our position."

"Or steal something. That would be more likely. If he comes over we must keep under

cover and watch him."

"I think we ought to take him prisoner, Frank. We two could handle him."

"I doubt it. If he's a full-fledged Indian he'd be as slippery as an eel."

"Yes, that's so; and he might have a knife in his belt. Then I think we had better rouse the camp if he attempts to swim over."

"No; I am afraid that would be bad policy. There's no knowing what a hullabaloo might be created. The boys would be excited and some of them might be shooting at him. The probability is he has no hostile purpose."

"I think you're out of your reckoning there, Frank. What is he armed for?"

"What are we armed for? Are we going to attack anybody?"

"No; but that's another thing. His purpose is very different from ours."

"Probably it is—to-night, at all events. I presume his purpose is to steal a blanket or something to eat."

"I believe he belongs to some hostile band and they've sent him out to reconnoiter."

"But in that case there'd be somebody with him. He has a mighty lonesome look to me."

"Then why don't he come in the daytime? He knows he can trust us."

"That's a poser, as sure as you live, Carl—I don't know why he doesn't; but I don't believe he's any scout or spy."

"Well, he isn't swimming across, evidently."

"No; he has been getting a drink, and now he's getting on to his feet again."

"Yes, and he's moving off towards the bay."

"And walking in the water—to cover up his trail, probably."

"And therefore his errand cannot be a friendly one."

"But a thief is just as anxious to cover his tracks as an Indian on the warpath. If that fellow had confederates he would be bolder than he is. He's as solitary as Robinson Crusoe."

"If he was sent out alone on purpose, Frank, of course he would look solitary to us; and I don't see why he would be bolder if he had companions."

"It isn't that he *looks* solitary—he *acts* so. He has a timid air about him, to me, as though he was afraid of us and didn't know exactly what to do about it. If he had a number of companions back in the woods I think he'd act very differently. Suppose you were here alone watching him, with no companions snoring away in yonder tent. I don't believe you'd talk as boldly as you do now."

"Of course not, because I wouldn't have anybody to talk to."

"Well, companionship breeds courage, Carl,—you know that as well as I do—and that fellow over there isn't acting very courageously. He stops and hesitates every few minutes. See there! He's coming back this way now."

"Now he has stopped again. He must be trying to get a back view of our camp, but I don't believe he can see much."

"No; but I think he acts as though he would like to come over here if he dared. Perhaps



he'll screw his courage up to the point pretty soon."

"What you call timidity, Frank, is only Indian caution. You may depend upon it, that fellow has a purpose in view, and not a very friendly one, either."

"And you may depend upon it that whoever is on that island came by accident as we did, and a band of Indians wouldn't be very likely to be driven ashore in a vessel. They don't travel around that way; but if they did, they would soon find some way to get off, as we shall."

"They travel in canoes, and this may be one of their favorite resorts."

"Then in that case, instead of that solitary individual over there, we could have seen a couple of well-filled canoes paddling around our camp."

"But if they were driven ashore in such a storm as wrecked our vessel, Frank, their frail barks would have been smashed all to pieces on these rocks, anywhere."

"Well, we shall see which is right by and by, I guess. But that fellow is a mighty lonesome appearing chap to me, and I think it more than likely that he has drifted here alone and don't know what to do with himself."

"I think one of us ought to take another turn about this island, Frank. How do we know there isn't a canoe sailing around us?"

"All right! You go ahead; it's your turn. I'll keep an eye on this fellow."

Carl made the circuit with great care, but discovered no signs of any other strangers. On his return Frank announced that the man had disappeared.

"He started up all of a sudden and made tracks for the woods, bounding away like a woodchuck scampering for his hole."

"Did he come back this way before he went?"

"Yes; he took his old position opposite here, after wandering around in an uncertain sort of a way. Once I thought he was going to swim across, for he waded into the water up to his waist. Perhaps he saw something that made him change his mind. Was anybody up when you passed the camp?"

"Pat came out and put some wood on the fire."

"That was it, then. He probably saw him, for he hurried out of the water and in two seconds was gone. Did you speak to Pat?"

"No; I thought it better to say nothing. I was afraid if he knew there was anything in the wind he would have the whole camp roused up and so frighten the fellow away."

"He has done that anyhow."

"But there was no use rousing the camp."

"No; the boys couldn't have done anything except to let him know he was seen, and that would have been bad policy. He doesn't know he has been watched, you see, now; so he may grow a little bolder and give us a chance to nab him some night."

"Of course, for us to have discovered him and not have been discovered ourselves gives us

a great advantage which we must profit by."

"We must put Dick and Sam on their guard when they relieve us."

"Of course."

"I'm glad Dick is one of them, Carl, and Sam will have some discretion too; but if we'd had Buster and Marsh here to-night there's no knowing what a rumpus would have been kicked up. We couldn't have kept them still two minutes. Buster would have fired half a dozen shots over there before this time, and I presume Marsh would have swum over and chased that Indian half way across the island."

"I shouldn't wonder. Marsh is a bold fellow, and reckless sometimes; but we need something besides bravery in a case like this. Marsh hasn't a particle of discretion."

"No more than a weasel. He's about as quick as one, though. But I say, Carl, it seems to me a little singular that that Indian should have darted away as he did. He hustled off like a pig caught in a garden patch."

"Probably he suddenly conceived the idea of retreating for the present, in order to reappear at some other point with companions."

"He certainly conceived an idea, and it was sudden, too; but I think it was the idea of a mouse—to get out of sight as soon as possible."

The boys continued their watch with great vigilance. Thinking the mysterious visitor might possibly reappear at some other point, they went alternately many times around the camp, but nothing more was seen of him that night.

At four o'clock they were relieved by Richard and Samuel, to whom they related all that had occurred, advising them to keep a vigilant watch.

## CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Carl and Frank related their adventure in the morning the camp was thrown into a state of great excitement. The discovery of the foot-steps at the great rock had aroused no little interest, but the presence of an Indian actually watching the camp at night seemed to many of the boys to be a matter of serious import, and some thought it demanded vigorous action at once.

Duncan and Isaac had decided to move the camp immediately to the spot selected on Saturday, but several now opposed that plan and strenuously urged that another and stronger party be sent out to reconnoiter that very day. Among them was Carl, who persuaded a number that the Indian was undoubtedly a scout belonging to a band inhabiting the larger island. Duncan had no such idea, but in deference to the "war party," as William laughingly styled them, he concluded to defer the removal until the matter had been very carefully and fully considered.

After breakfast he called the boys all together and said to them:

"I would like to have you all be seated and talk this matter over in a quiet and orderly

manner. We can decide nothing in all this confusion. I see there is great diversity of opinion, and I want you to express your views freely. I will decide according to the weight of the arguments presented. Now the question is, Shall we move our camp to-day as we had decided to do, or shall we send out another exploring party? As to going out on the warpath, I will say at the outset we shall do no such thing. If there are Indians here disposed to be hostile, which I do not believe, we must wait for some demonstration on their part before making any hostile move ourselves. Now, I am chairman of this meeting and shall require you to speak one at a time, to prevent confusion, and will give everyone an opportunity to express his views."

"Mr. Chairman," said Sam, "I would like to ask a question. Supposing we should move our camp to-day, would we be in as safe a location as we are now? Is the place selected as good a one to defend as this one is?"

"Ten times better!" cried Henry. "It's already fortified on one side by a high wall of rock, and we can easily build palisades on the other in a few hours. I am in favor of moving our camp to-day and fortifying it, and then we can send out another expedition. It'll be a great advantage to be well fortified, for I don't suppose the enemy is fortified at all."

"Probably not, Mr. Chairman," drawled Ransom, "because imaginary enemies are not often found to be very well fortified."

"Imaginary enemies!" cried Marshall. "You can't claim that this is an imaginary enemy, Rans, for our guard has seen him, or at least his outpost. I believe that fellow has confederates, and we ought to let them know that we are here in strong force and mean to defend ourselves. We needn't attack them first, of course, but we can let them see our strength and show them that we are not afraid of them."

"Turn out in strong force," returned Ransom ironically, "to subdue a hungry savage looking for a good square meal, and so win 'the highest name for valiant acts!'"

"A single footstep in the mud and a solitary wanderer doesn't prove the presence of a whole tribe," remarked Will.

"It doesn't!" answered Carl. "Didn't the early settlers of this country conclude that one redskin sneaking around the settlement, armed to the teeth, indicated that there were more in the vicinity, and on the warpath, too?"

"Clear case of *non sequitur*," responded Ransom.

"Of course it is," added Will. "Our presence here doesn't prove the presence of a whole college paraphernalia, does it—library, scientific apparatus and all?"

"No; but that is a different thing," replied Carl. "Anyhow, I think we ought to start out to-day and search the island. I believe we would find a whole band. And we could retreat back here if we found them in too great force and make preparations to defend ourselves. We'd know what to expect then and wouldn't be taken by surprise. This is the best place to

defend, because it's entirely surrounded by water."

"Mr. Chairman," said Frank, rising to his feet and clearing his throat for an oratorical effort, "Mr. Chairman, I rise to urge the removal to-day. I do so for the reason that our present position is a weak one. It lies low, and the enemy's artillery can rake it from end to end! I speak as a military man. I served my country in a company of youthful volunteers who drilled with cedar poles, and I achieved distinction by valiantly punching the captain in the ribs when he hit me over the head with his pine sword! But more than this, I am proud to say that I come of a military race. My father's step-brother's second cousin was a drummer in a militia company, and my sister's husband's great-uncle achieved wealth and distinction in the Civil War. He was a sutler! Now my friend Slocum claims that this is a safe position for us because we are entirely surrounded by water. Were our ancestors, the Antediluvians, safe because they were entirely surrounded by water? We have had a little experience ourselves with the fickle element recently, and have learned that even water needs to be taken with some moderation. Why is not the fickle element a safeguard here? Because the enemy can put on his bathing suit and swim across that channel as easy as sitting down on ice—and then we would be at his mercy. Fifteen of us at the mercy of a single hungry savage! If he should happen to be a cannibal, my dear brothers, our case would be desperate indeed! Think of being boiled in Pat's pot to satisfy his ravenous appetite—not Pat's appetite, but the Indian's! I beg you to reflect upon this, my brothers!"

"Come, Frank, you know that's all nonsense," interrupted Carl.

"Is it greater nonsense," retorted Frank seriously, "than making a great parade of warlike preparations, stopping our work and losing precious time, because a solitary redskin comes prowling about and runs the instant he sees a sign of life in the camp? If he knew it he would laugh in his sleeve, if he happens to have one on. Let us go ahead with our work, say I, taking due precautions, of course, and keeping up our camp guard—we don't want our grub or blankets stolen—and if that Indian comes around, treat him like a gentleman and give him a slice of ham!"

"Suppose there should be a dozen of them," cried Marshall.

"Then it would take more ham!" returned Frank.

"I think Frank's advice is good," said Duncan, smiling, "notwithstanding his nonsense; and unless some of you have stronger reasons to urge than have yet been presented, we will adhere to our first plan and move our camp to-day. I have no doubt that in time this mystery about our neighbor will be solved, and that we shall find we have no occasion for warlike proceedings."

"Then you don't propose to have our new camp fortified?" said Carl.

"Yes, I think that would be a wise precaution. A stockade, as Henry proposed, will protect us against wind and wolves (should any be found) as well as other enemies, and if you and he are disposed to take the matter in charge I shall be well pleased."

The work of removal began immediately. Everything had to be transported on the raft, which was brought around to the north side of the islet near the tent, and when loaded it was rowed across the bay to a convenient landing place near the spot chosen for the new camping ground.

Carl and Henry went over with the first load and with the help of some others began work on the palisades. They labored manfully for several hours, placing upright timbers in the ground, beginning at the terrace rock which they had selected to form one side of their fortification. Henry, however, while offering any amount of advice, really performed very little labor, spending his time chiefly in doing guard duty, which he declared was a very necessary precaution.

Meanwhile the work of removal went rapidly on. Several of the boys, among whom was William Staples, were occupied in carrying the things to the new camp as they were unloaded from the raft. Every time he came near the stockade he had some merry remark to make about the work. He finally sat down on a stump and appeared to watch the laborers with great interest. Suddenly he burst into a hearty laugh.

"What are you laughing at, Staples?" asked Carl, who suspected that he had discovered some flaw in the work, and was a little nettled at such a display of merriment. "What are you laughing at?" he repeated. "Perhaps you had better take hold of this work yourself if you think you can do it any better."

Will made no answer, but continued to laugh with the greatest glee, rolling on the ground and shouting with all his might. Then suddenly he sprang to his feet and crying, "Just look at this, will you!" ran to one side of the rocky wall and climbed the terrace. In an instant he appeared on the elevation above their heads, and letting himself down from the overhanging rock, dropped lightly to the ground. Turning to Carl, he exclaimed between his bursts of laughter:

"Your military skill beats—ha, ha, ha!—your skill as a navigator! Ha, ha, ha! I'm afraid I shall never get over this!"

Carl's face flushed to the roots of his hair, for he began to suspect the truth; but he felt strongly inclined to defend his position. Henry laughed good-naturedly and wondered, for he hadn't the slightest idea what William meant.

"Well," said Carl, "I don't see what all this foolish performance amounts to, anyway. You're always up to some foolish dodge."

"It amounts to this," answered Will, still laughing, "that you're building a fort that an enemy can jump right into without the slightest trouble."

"That's so, boys," said Sam; "we've been

stupid—that's a fact. This wall of rock would be a good defence if our fort was on top of it, but down here there's nothing to hinder an enemy shooting right into it. It's strange none of us thought of that before."

"But we would put sentinels up there, of course," returned Carl, unwilling to acknowledge the error; "and besides, I should hope we'd be on our guard and not stand still to be shot down."

"But don't you see the disadvantage of being exposed to the fire of an enemy in your own fort—an enemy fifteen or twenty feet above your heads?" said Will. "You know yourself, Carl, that's ridiculous, if you'd only admit it; but there are none so blind as those who don't want to see."

"That's so," admitted Henry good-naturedly; "it would be ridiculous. It was all my fault, anyhow. You know I was the first one that proposed to fortify this place."

"Oh, I'm perfectly able to take my share of the blame," returned Carl, still looking mortified and vexed. "I don't pretend to know anything about military affairs, but I do claim to know something of seamanship."

"That's all right," said Will; "we all acknowledge the justice of your claim, Carl. But I had to laugh a little at your engineering feat. It was too funny to see you all working like beavers to give an enemy such a splendid chance to jump right into your fort!" And he began to laugh again.

Sam and Henry laughed heartily, too; and finally the ludicrous side of the incident took possession of them all, and Carl joined good-naturedly in the chorus.

"Well," he said, "our work here goes for nothing, then, and we shall have to begin all over again somewhere else."

"I believe I know where there's a splendid place," said Sam.

"Where?" they asked.

"Right close by. Do you see that little knoll over there, covered with trees? I was thinking about that place coming up here. It's elevated and has the advantage of being nearer the water than this one."

"That's so, Sam," responded Henry. "Let's go over and look at it; but of course Duncan will have to be consulted."

"And there he comes, just in the nick of time," cried Will; "and all the rest are with him. You go ahead and I'll bring him over there."

The knoll was a small, irregular piece of elevated ground half the height of the terrace, situated near the shore of the little bay about two hundred yards from the landing.

Will ran down to the shore, and explaining the situation to Duncan, led him to the spot. Duncan readily agreed to the change.

"My chief reason for selecting the other place," he said, "was to find shelter from the northwest winds. But as you propose to build palisades to protect us against wind and storm, as well as other enemies, I shall be quite satisfied with the arrangement. This location is

nearer Ike's shipyard, too, and that, I think, will be a decided advantage."

"Then shall we put up the tent here?" asked Carl.

"Certainly. Tell the boys to bring it here, and all the rest of the things. We will place the tent right in this pleasant little grove."

Carl and Henry laid off the ground for the new stockade, and having now many helpers, the work went rapidly on. But darkness overtook them before they had completed one side of their fortification. Worn out with the labors of the day, they retired early to rest, Duncan and Isaac generously volunteering to act as camp guard for the night.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE ensuing four days were spent in building the stockade and getting everything about the camp in order. A hen-house was built in one corner of the enclosure and a storehouse in another; while one side of the tent was fitted up as a dining-room, a long table of cedar poles being so placed that the beds, which were made of the same materials, might serve as seats at meal times.

Meanwhile Patrick, not to be outdone by the others, gathered a quantity of stones and began the erection of a fireplace and chimney. As flat stones were difficult to find and round ones not well adapted to building, his chimney fell down before it was half completed. But Pat was equal to the occasion, for discarding the round stones altogether, he worked the flat ones into his fireplace and topped out with mud.

All these improvements were completed by Friday afternoon. In the evening the boys all gathered around their fire, which blazed and crackled briskly in the new fireplace, enjoying its warmth and conversing in a very lively and animated manner. They were enjoying a sense of present security and comfort that they had not experienced before.

Isaac had begun work on the schooner that day in earnest, assisted by Richard and Frank. While the others were gayly chatting around him, he sat with his head buried in his hands, paying no attention to the conversation. Duncan observed his attitude and asked him how he was getting on with his work. Isaac sat up, and shaking his head slowly, replied:

"It's mighty slow progress, Mr. Duncan. The fact is, that vessel was put together too well to come to pieces easy."

"Then it will require more time than you expected, I suppose."

"It ain't altogether a question of time, I find. The trouble is that in spite of all my care some of them boards get split, and there ain't no lumber here to take their place. I expected to spoil some of 'em, but I thought there would be enough that could be spared from the holds and cabin to finish her outside; but I don't believe there will be."

"Oh, that is certainly unfortunate. What then can you do?"

"I can save enough to build a smaller vessel, I guess; but it won't be more'n a quarter of the tonnage of this one," replied Isaac mournfully.

"And you couldn't use the present frame in that case, could you?"

"I'd have to reduce every piece, and that would take a long time."

"Longer than to use the same frame, building her the same dimensions she is now?"

"Yes, it would be a longer job than to put her together just as she is, if I had the lumber, 'cause the whole frame and all the fittings inside and out are complete and ready to set up, except them five ribs."

"What a pity we cannot convert some of these fine trees into lumber! We have abundance of excellent material here, but no way to utilize it."

"I've been studying over that," Isaac replied, nervously shifting his position and leaning his head against the chimney, "and I've thought that perhaps I could use that water-power over the falls; but there's one great difficulty about that."

"What is it?"

"The want of a saw."

"The very thing most needed! A sawmill without a saw would be of little use."

"That's about the size of it. I've been wondering if I could do anything with a handsaw. That's the only thing I've got."

"A saw, is it?" suddenly asked Pat.

"Yes," answered Isaac.

"Arrah! I have it, Captain Ike."

"You have a saw! What do you mean?"

"It's this I'm ather sayin', Captain Ike: There's a big whale in the vessel."

"A whale in the vessel!" laughed Will.

"That's like your elephant at the big rock. It must be a sturgeon you've discovered, or a large whitefish."

"Away wid your nonsinse, Mистер Will! It's a whale and no fish at all."

"But whales are not found in these waters, Pat."

"I'm not sayin' they be, for I found it on the shore and put it in the vessel wid me own hands."

"Seems to be a little off his balance!" remarked Ransom, *sotto voce*.

"Whisht, Mистер Dhryasdust! Is it aff me balance ye're sayin' I am, wid dust in your own eyes as thick as the head of yez? It's shtupid ye are all, ivery spalpeen of yez—as shtupid as Paddy O'Rourke whin he grazed the gentleman's carriage all over from top to bottom, but put none of it on the axletree where it was wanted. It's a saw I'm tellin' ye about—a whale saw."

"What!" cried Isaac. "Do you mean to say there's a circular saw in the vessel?"

"It's that same I'm sayin', Captain Ike."

"How did it get there?"

"I was ather tellin' ye, but for the shtupidity of these young gentlemen. Do ye mind whin ye tould me to load her wid ballast?"

"Just before we made our last trip across the

lake? Yes; I told you to put in a lot of old iron that Sam Blake had there by his shop."

"And ye said put in iverthing there was in the pile."

"Yes; it was what Blake told me I could take for ballast, but there wasn't a circular saw included."

"But there was, for I included it meself."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Will; "Biddy shall know of this, and if she doesn't reward you, Pat, as our good genius whose gift has saved our vessel, we'll vote her a jade on the spot."

"And do ye mind, Captain Ike," the Irishman went on without noticing the interruption, "that ye tould me to put in all the heavy things?"

"I s'pose I did say that. There was an old anvil, I noticed, and some heavy castings that I wanted you to get; but a circular saw ain't very heavy."

"Indade that wan is, for it weighs two hundred av it weighs a pound."

"Two hundred!"

"It's that I'm sayin', wid its iron riggin'."

"Is the iron frame there, too?"

"It is."

"I remember seeing one standing at the end of the shop, now that you speak of it," said Isaac, laughing. "Blake told me it was some gearing left there to be mended. But, Reilly, you might have been arrested for stealing it, and perhaps you will be when we get home."

"Mebbe so," Pat replied composedly; "but what will the jury say whin the property is found in the hold of the 'Vinture,' owned and sailed by Captain Ike Wilkins?"

"He has you there, Ike," said Will.

"All right," Isaac replied, laughing. "I'll go your bail, Pat, for you've done me a mighty good turn by your mistake. It makes my mind easy about the sawmill, for if we don't get that saw to running inside of a month, my name ain't Isaac Wilkins."

"Have you any more treasures in that hold, Pat?" asked Frank.

"I mind a few things. There's an anvil, and a sledge hammer, and some axes widout handles, sphades, too, and there's thim little whales—"

"More whales!" interrupted Will. "Indeed, the sea monsters are multiplying."

"He means wheels, don't you know?" said Walter.

"Of course; but what kind are they?"

"Car whales they'll be, Mither Will, but little wans."

"Oh, truck wheels, such as they use on the little car they push along the wharf," cried Willie.

"The same," returned Pat.

"Well, Reilly," said Duncan smiling, "you have done us a good service, and I think we shall find use for all you have brought in the vessel. You said there was an old anvil in the hold, did you not?"

"I did."

"And I suppose a quantity of old iron of all sorts?"

"There is. I took all there was, old or new, on that side of the shop."

"I believe you, Reilly," laughed Isaac.

"Well," resumed Duncan, "while Isaac is building his sawmill I will put up a forge, if we can invent some way to make a pair of bellows,—and I think we can. I am quite at home in a blacksmith shop—as much so as Carl is on ship-board, although I never served an apprenticeship. I learned many of the mysteries of the trade in my boyhood, and acquired quite a reputation among my playmates by doing little odd jobs for them. Isaac may need some ironwork done, and I am the man that can do it for him, provided Pat has a good stock of old iron."

"I have that same, and a bit of new along wid it," answered Pat.

"There wasn't no new in that pile, though, Reilly," said Isaac.

"Ah, but I was affther tellin' ye that I took all there was on that side of the shop."

"But it wasn't all in one pile."

"Indade was it, av there was a pile at all. It was scattered all about."

"I should have thought Blake would have been after you, hammer and tong."

"Niver a sight of him did I have the day. The shop was shut up and locked wid a big padlock."

"That was lucky for Blake, or Pat would have cleaned out the whole establishment," laughed Will.

"What day was it?" asked Isaac.

"It was the day the sojers was out wid life and dhrum, goin' to the cimeteries."

"Oh, Decoration Day! Yes, I remember now. I was away all day, and we sailed bright and early the next morning. Ha, ha! I wonder what Blake said when he missed his iron? You see, I didn't go back there at all till the day you all came aboard. He's probably been looking everywhere for the thief except in the right place. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a thafe I am, Captain Ike," returned Pat, earnestly. "I did but obey your orders, whin ye tould me to put in the iron till the vessel settled to a mark ye made wid a piece of chalk. And do ye mind, whin ye cam' home ye axed me had I done it, and I says, says I, 'Come and see,' and ye says, 'It's all right av she's down to the chalk line,' and I says, 'Indade she'll be, and it may be a way bit over,' and ye says, 'That will do.' It's not a thafe I'll be."

"Good for you, Pat!" exclaimed Frank. "Stand up for your rights! I hold you to be an honest man, and I propose to prove it to the satisfaction of the jury. Now the situation was just this: Captain Ike wanted to enjoy the holiday with his best girl, and so he put on his Sunday-go-to-meeting suit and said to you, 'Reilly, your buxom lass is luxuriating on the shore of Loch Foyle, and you cannot see her to-day—'"

"Och! But he niver said that at all," interrupted Pat.

"Did he not? Very well. But he did say that the schooner needed ballast, because you

were go'ng out all empty the very next day."

"He did."

"Certainly; and he said he expected to be absent a while that day."

"He did; but it was three days before that he tould me about the iron."

"Very well; and he was in a hurry to be off that morning, because his lady was waiting for him in her best bib and tucker and her new spring hat all trimmed up with artificial daisies—"

"It may be so; he didn't say," interrupted Pat.

"But it's extremely probable—you'll admit that. You are quite sure, however, that he told you there was a pile of iron at Blake's shop which you were to put into the hold of the schooner, are you not?"

"I am."

"And did he send you to find it alone?"

"He did."

"And did he tell you to bring the heaviest of it?"

"That he did; and whin I had it all in I brought aboard a keg o' nails."

"Nails!" exclaimed Isaac.

"That's what I'm sayin', Captain Ike, and ye cannot say it was sht'al'n' thim I was, for they cam' out o' your own barrun."

"Quite right," said Frank; "you are not charged with stealing the nails. Now when you went to the shop you found the iron lying around promiscuously, did you not?"

"I did; old and new."

"Was the iron rusty?"

"It was as brown wid rust as thim curly locks of ye, Mr. Frank."

"Well, under those circumstances, was it easy, or was it not, to distinguish between the old and the new?"

"It was not."

"There, gentlemen of the jury! I think the innocence of the prisoner is established to the satisfaction of the most stupid among you. It is true, he denies the relevancy of my allusion to his buxom Biddy who blossoms on the hills of County Donegal, and mingles her tears for him with the saltier waters of Loch Foyle; but what man among you does not attribute that denial to modesty? Not one, I venture to say, who remembers his schoolboy days, when he used to walk home from singing school with his best girl of a winter's night, or battered his dinner pail all up over the head of the miscreant who pushed her little brother down in the snow. I perceive that you are moved by this appeal, gentlemen, and well you may be. It is hard on the dinner pail, but it's exhilarating exercise, especially when you get a look of approval from the little boy's sister. Alas! the very thought of it in our present isolated situation is enough to melt the stoutest heart. I should weep, gentlemen of the jury, if I had a pocket handkerchief about me! May it please your honor, the defence now rests its case."

"Hurrah, Frank! You'd make a good criminal lawyer," cried Carl; "but according to your own theory, I expect you'll turn up a

clown in Forepaugh's circus one of these days."

"No," replied Frank, "I shall probably turn up a furrow to the song of the crow on my grandfather's farm."

"I wish Pat had put in a plow with the rest of his old iron," cried Walter.

"What for would I be puttin' a plow?" asked Pat.

"Why," said Willie, "to plow up some land with, of course."

"There's land enough, to be sure, but where's the horse? Is it yourself, Willie, would pull the plow?"

"Well, no; I didn't think about a horse. But we ought to plant some potatoes and corn somehow. Walter and I have been talking it over, and we think it necessary to have a garden."

"That same would be a comfort indade, for the canned goods is growin' less wid great rapidity. The appetites of some of these young gentlemen will be the ruin of us all, av something isn't done wid shpade and celerity."

"I agree with you, Pat," said James. "We only had supplies to last a month, and they won't last half that time at the rate they're going now. What we shall do when they are all gone is a serious question. As for rabbits and fish, I just abominate them."

"What have we that we can plant, besides potatoes and corn?" asked Duncan.

"Peas!" cried Richard. "I saw some scattered about in the after hold of the schooner to-day, and I believe we could sweep up half a bushel or more."

"And I've got something too," cried James, springing up and running into the tent. In a moment he returned with a number of crumpled envelopes in his hand, which he tossed into Willie's lap, saying, "They're garden seeds. I found 'em the day we sailed in the pockets of this old vest, which I hadn't worn since the Easter holidays. I sowed some hotbeds one day, and all the papers that had any left in them I crammed into my vest pockets, and there they stayed till the day we went aboard the schooner. I was going to throw them away, but I'm glad I didn't, now."

"Hurrah!" cried Richard, "that's just grand. We can raise some bouncing vegetables here, for this is virgin soil. I was noticing it the other day up near the great rock. It's as black as your hat, and everything we put into it will grow like wildfire."

"Aren't we in luck to-night, though, with our seeds and saws!" said Frank. "Has anyone else got an old vest he hasn't worn since the Easter holidays? And Ike, what other cargoes have you carried besides peas? Couldn't you find an old ruptured bundle of leather in the hold? Duncan will need some for his bel-lows."

"Wouldn't otter skins do for that?" asked Henry.

"Certainly," replied Duncan.

"Then I'll shoot a dozen for you to-morrow, if you want," said Henry again.

"And skin them?" asked Richard.

"Well, yes, I suppose so, with some help."

"Very well, Henry," said Duncan: "then I will ask you and Marshall to attend to that matter for us. And now some other arrangements are necessary, for if we carry out our plans there will be enough for us all to do. The garden must be made right away, and a strong force will be needed to spade up a part of the glade for that purpose. Now, Richard, I'll ask you to take that matter in hand. There are four good spades—but I would like to take one of them with me to-morrow—and Reilly has several more that can easily be furnished with handles. I have a little enterprise of my own for to-morrow morning and shall want four of you to go with me. That will leave seven free, besides Isaac, to work in the garden—unless Ike wants some help on the schooner."

"No, not to-morrow," returned Isaac. "I'd like to go down to the vessel and overhaul the saw, but after that I'll help in the garden."

"Then our arrangements are all made, and I think we had better prepare for rest," said Duncan, rising and leading the way to the tent.

## CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING had been seen of the mysterious stranger since the removal of the camp. The incident of Sunday night was therefore scarcely thought of at all the following morning, when the boys began their preparations to carry out the plans made the evening before.

By ten o'clock a large force was at work breaking the ground for the garden, and Duncan had left the camp according to the arrangement. He had purposely kept the object of his expedition to himself; and Carl, Frank, Sam and Will, who accompanied him, were quite as much in the dark as anyone as to where they were going or what they were to do.

They proceeded leisurely in a westerly direction, keeping under the rocky ridge and following its windings, until they were about half a mile from camp. Duncan then stopped, and taking the spade from Carl, began to dig vigorously in the ground. The boys looked curiously on, wondering what his object could be.

"Are you prospecting for gold?" Will finally asked.

"Not exactly," he replied; "but I am looking for something more useful to us than gold, at least just now."

"Jim would say it must be something to eat, then."

"Well, it has a close connection with eating."

"That's a puzzler," said Frank. "It must be something to help the appetite, in view of the doleful prospect before us of rabbits and fish as our sole diet; I mean before the potatoes are ripe. Think of our bill of fare—fried fish for breakfast, boiled rabbit for dinner and fish and rabbit cooked together in the same pot for supper!"

"That's the very idea," said Duncan, picking up a large piece of clay. "I think we are all

rather tired of having everything cooked in a single pot, and when it comes to rabbits and fish, it will be infinitely worse. Now, if I'm not mistaken, this will make excellent potters' clay. I intend to make a trial of it at all events, and see if we cannot manufacture some household utensils."

"Earthenware for pots and stewpans!" exclaimed Frank.

"Certainly; and for receptacles for our food after it is cooked. It is far from decent to have everything served up out of Pat's one kettle."

"Yes," cried Will; "and after it has stood awhile in the pot it tastes strong enough of iron to stock a drug store."

"Say no more, Will!" said Frank; "the argument is conclusive. We need some earthenware badly. Whew! I can taste the old kettle now. Let us carry home a cart-load of this clay! Iron is excellent in its place—it makes good railroads and jackknives—but as a flavoring for soups I prefer tomatoes."

"Shall we take home a load of this clay?" asked Sam.

"Not now," answered Duncan; "I only want a sample to-try. We must go on, for I am looking for specimens of limestone also. When I build my forge I shall want both brick and mortar."

"Wouldn't stones do for brick?" asked Will.

"There are no flat stones to be found, it seems; at least, Pat was not successful in finding many, you know. I am sure we can make brick more easily than we can quarry stones."

"How about transportation?"

"The lake!" responded Carl.

"No," said Duncan; "I want a quicker mode. The ground here is level with a slight descent towards the camp, and we can easily clear the way for some sort of a vehicle. It must be three or four times as far around by water, and this place is a considerable distance from the lake, besides."

"That's what's the matter," said Frank; "we must have rapid transit, and in lieu of electric wires and steam engines we'll have a cable from the vessel and a dozen stout fellows to pull it. It'll furnish occupation for some of those lazy chaps that want to lie around the camp, or hunt and fish all the time."

"You've hit the nail on the head there, Frank," returned Will. "Three or four of the boys would be perfectly willing to let the rest of us do all the work. Buster and March, for instance, get tired the quickest of any fellows I ever saw. They'll tramp all day hunting for a rabbit, but when it comes to buckling down to good honest work, like building a storehouse, they're not there."

"And of course Tom is always tired when Marsh is!" responded Frank.

"Of course. And I don't think Jim likes to work very well, either, but he isn't as bad as Marsh or Buster. But Rans Storey really surprised me the other day; he worked like a beaver on the palisades."

"Rans isn't lazy," said Carl; "he's a regular

plodder. That's the way he does with his books. I always go to him when I want any help."

"Well, boys, you have struck a chord that I intended to touch upon myself before our return," said Duncan. "I would not encourage you in talking about your comrades, for I think it a despicable habit; but there is some truth in what you say about some of the boys being unwilling to do their share of the labor. I do not think they are particularly lazy, but they are thoughtless and do not seem to appreciate the necessity of serious work. Placed as we now are, I deem it of vital importance that we should all have some useful occupation. Our situation has been entirely changed. We are not now out on a pleasure trip, but are residents of this island for the time being, and our residence here may extend over many months. We cannot afford to forget our manners, or grow rough and coarse in our conversation and habits of life. Nor must we permit ourselves to drift into habits of indolence and ease, forgetting what we owe to each other and to the proprieties of Christian life. Besides, we have an arduous task before us, which will tax our energies to the utmost. It seems to me, therefore, that we need some sort of government besides my own personal influence. I do not wish to be always preaching, or attempting to rule by my own *ipse dixit*. I want you boys to establish a government for yourselves, and I will conform to all the laws, but I should claim the right to be your chief executive. I propose this for a number of reasons. In the first place, I have already observed symptoms of a reluctance to recognize my authority. In the second place, I desire to cultivate a public spirit among the boys, so that all will be interested in the common welfare and be more inclined to set aside their own preferences and pleasures to promote it. In the next place, I fear the spirit of discontent that is sure to arise in time, when some of the boys will have grown weary of their present pursuits. Many of them are recklessly wasting their ammunition, which will soon become exhausted, and then from sheer ennui there will arise a spirit of dissatisfaction that will be prolific of quarrels and tend to turn our little community into a veritable babel of discord. We must cultivate an *esprit de corps* among the boys, get them interested in our plans and encourage them all to work seriously for the common good. And you four can help me very materially, if you will."

"So you propose that we set up an independent form of government on these islands, and take our stand as one of the 'powers' among the nations of the earth!" exclaimed Frank. "I agree with you, Duncan. It's high time we asserted ourselves, for we are a colony of age and experience—ten days old! We will raise the standard of revolt against our oppressors, who would reduce us to the condition of slaves and compel us to live on rabbits and fish! Shall it be a republic or a limited monarchy, since you repudiate the idea of absolutism?"

"As you please," replied Duncan, smiling; "but I am in earnest, Frank, and I want you

to consider my proposition seriously. I do think we should adopt some wholesome rules for our government, and I want the boys to do it themselves and see that they are carried out. I asked you to come with me to-day for the very purpose of talking with you about it. Talk it over with the others, and let the proposition seem to come from you. I think they will fall in with the idea, and if they do, I am sure it will go a long way towards bringing about the result we are seeking."

"Dick will be with us, I know," said Frank.

"And Rans Storey too," cried Carl.

"All will, except Marsh, Tom, Jim and Buster," said William.

"And those four will be incorrigible, I'm afraid," added Sam.

"No, they won't," said Frank; "we can buy them with office! Put Marsh at the head of our Fish Commission and make Buster Secretary of War, and you'll find them the most zealous advocates of good government."

"How about work?" asked Will.

"Oh, they'll advocate the hardest kind of work—for everybody but themselves!"

"I only ask you to use your influence for the right," said Duncan. "Try and get the four you have mentioned interested in our plans, and I think all will be well."

They all assured him of their entire concurrence in his views and promised their hearty assistance.

This conversation took place while they were walking along, examining the rocks and stones in the ridge. Presently Duncan secured some specimens of limestone, and then turning to his companions, said:

"I had an idea of prolonging our walk to see what there is in the west end of our island. Possibly we might find some more traces of our mysterious visitor. What do you say—shall we go on?"

"How far are we from camp?" asked Carl.

"I should say about three quarters of a mile."

"Well, you know we do not know how many other inhabitants of this island there are."

"Do you still think there is a band of Indians here?"

"I hardly know what to think," Carl replied. "I confess I fully expected we would be attacked while building the stockade, for an enemy would hardly wait till we were secure behind our defences before beginning a campaign; but now the case begins to look different."

Duncan smiled.

"There may possibly be more than one Indian on this island," he said, "but I do not apprehend that we shall find any on the warpath."

"Nor I," said Frank. "I doubt if there is a single redskin among the whole lot about this lake, that knows how to shout the old-time war-whoop. The days of Indian chivalry on these borders have passed away. The real warriors have departed to the celestial hunting grounds with 'the last of the Mohicans.'"

"Well," returned Carl, "my conjectures have not been verified, although I do think there was



some reason for them a few days ago."

"Let's go ahead, then, and explore the rest of the island," cried Will.

All agreeing to this, they continued their

The ground now began to fall away perceptibly, and in a short time they found themselves descending a steep hill, which brought them to the lowlands discovered by Carl from the treetop on the day of their exploration. Here the trees were small and scattering, and the ground in many places wet and swampy. They were obliged often to deviate from their course to avoid the marshy spots. Once they accidentally ran into one of them, sinking into the springy soil above their shoe-tops.

As they struggled through the mire, William, who had come perilously near leaving his shoes behind him, exclaimed:

"I say, fellows! It's a lucky thing I took my watch cord for shoestrings this morning, for the old ones wouldn't have stood this strain, and I should have had to wade through this mire in my stocking feet."

"Ho, you are lucky to have some stocking feet," responded Frank. "There's mighty little left of my socks but the legs. I only wear them for the sake of appearances. We must be genteel, you know, as long as we can. But there's one thing certain—we've got the best end of this island."

"That's so," cried Carl. "I don't believe anything lives in this miserable region, for we haven't seen a sign of life since we descended the hill."

"I don't know about that," answered Sam, who had reached dry ground and stood waiting for the others. "I think there's an animal of some kind about here, for I just heard a sound like the cry of an owl or the howl of a wolf."

"A wolf or an owl! They're about as much alike as the coo of a dove and the bray of a donkey," laughed Will.



It was . . . a large, handsome St. Bernard dog.

walk, following the windings of the terrace until it turned abruptly to the right, when they left it and plunged into the thick bushes that fringed the woods in that direction.

"Keep still, won't you! There it is again—listen!" Sam cried.

They all heard it distinctly now. It rose on the air shrill and piercing, and then died away gradually in a low, mournful sound that seemed to express the deepest lamentation and woe.

"That was the howl of a wolf," said Carl.

"Listen!" exclaimed Sam again.

The distant howl arose once more, sharper and shriller than before, and died away again in a prolonged, mournful strain.

"That sounds like a cry of distress," said Duncan.

"Don't you think it's a wolf?" asked Carl.

"I hardly know. Wolves howl at night, and this is the first sound of the kind we have heard. If there were wolves on the island we would certainly have heard them before this; and wolves go in packs, but this animal seems to be alone."

"If he's alone we're a match for him; and I say let's go ahead and investigate," cried Will.

"Very well," said Duncan; "but have your pieces ready, and don't fire till I give the word."

They went on in silence, guided by the howling, which continued at intervals and became nearer and more distinct as they advanced. In a short time they left the marshy ground and found themselves on a slightly elevated plain, covered with trees and thick bushes which obstructed their view in every direction.

They were proceeding cautiously and as quietly as possible, holding themselves in readiness for any surprise, when suddenly a deep growl directly in front of them arrested their attention. They stopped and gazed, straining their eyes in the direction of the sound, hoping to get a sight of the object of their search, but they could see nothing. The growl came from behind a clump of bushes that completely shut off their view.

Duncan made a sign for the others to follow and moved cautiously around to the right, in order to bring the animal within the range of their vision. The growling continued more fiercely than ever until they reached a point where they were seen, when it suddenly ceased. Then the boys found themselves face to face with the object of their search. It was neither a wolf nor any other wild animal of the forest, but—a large, handsome St. Bernard dog!

That they were surprised it is unnecessary to say; and the noble animal seemed equally so. He looked at them intently for a moment and then began to bark vociferously. Duncan dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground.

"It would be a crime to shoot that fine fellow," he said; "he was never raised in these wilds."

"He probably belongs to the mysterious stranger," said Will.

"Probably he does, and we must make friends with him if possible, for we may be near a solution of the mystery."

Acting on this suggestion, they all began to whistle and coax the dog in a very friendly

manner, making every demonstration of amity and good-will they could think of. He ceased barking and began to show more signs of fear now than hostility. He seemed to be in doubt whether to trust them or not. He retreated as they advanced, crying and whining at intervals as though in great doubt and uncertainty.

As they continued their friendly overtures, however, he allowed them to come nearer, until Frank, carefully approaching within a few feet of him, stooped and reached out his hand. The animal timidly advanced a step and smelled it in true dog fashion. Instantly all doubt seemed to disappear. He sprang upon Frank and licked his face, and then ran leaping from one to another, giving expression to the most extravagant joy.

"How glad he is to find some friends!" said Sam. "I wonder if his master is sick or anything—something must have happened."

"Are you in distress for your master, old fellow?" asked Duncan, addressing the dog. "You have found friends who will help him. Now go on and show us the way!"

So saying, he pointed forward, and the intelligent animal evidently understood the action if not the words, for he turned directly and trotted on before them, looking back to see if they were following. He led them to the door of a wretched hut made of pine and cedar branches, piled indiscriminately upon a framework of poles, which seemed ready to be crushed in by the weight. The dog stopped at the door, and looking up into their faces, began to whine and cry piteously.

They passed in, but their own forms in the narrow doorway made the dark place still darker, and at first they could see nothing. But as their eyes became accustomed to the obscurity they discovered the form of a man lying on a rude bed of poles and branches in an opposite corner. Duncan advanced to the bedside, and motioning to the others to stand out of the light, bent over the upturned face. It was cold and rigid in death!

"We are too late," he said in a low tone. "Now we can understand the poor brute's distress. His master is dead."

"Is he a white man or an Indian?" asked Carl in a hushed voice.

"A white man, and I should say from some cultured home. But let us go outside and see what is best to be done."

They passed out quickly, for the man had evidently been dead several days.

"This is fearful," whispered Will. "Just think of dying in this wilderness, without a soul to speak a word of comfort or even to bring a cup of cold water."

"It was a dreadful fate," said Frank, solemnly; "but some of us may be left here—who can tell?"

"Oh, I trust not, with all my heart!" Duncan answered earnestly, a shade of anxiety passing over his face; "may God in his mercy forbid! But come, we must be doing. The first thing is to give this poor stranger Christian burial."

"If we had only explored the island Monday,

as some of us wanted to, Duncan," said Carl, "we might have saved this poor fellow's life." Duncan was deeply pained by this remark, and Carl regretted it immediately.

"But of course," he hastened to add, "it was decided by what seemed to be for the best."

"Certainly," added Frank; "no one could have known there was a sick man here."

"But there wasn't, then," said Will, "for you and Carl saw him Sunday night."

"That's a fact," responded Frank; "I presume his sickness was coming on then, for I thought he acted rather strangely."

"Yes," returned Duncan, "we have found a solution of our mystery, but it is painful to have found it under such sad circumstances. And it involves another and a deeper one, for who he was and how he met his death are questions that will probably never be answered."

"There may be something about his clothes that will throw light on the subject," suggested Frank.

They re-entered the hut, but found nothing inside excepting a little worn hand satchel lying at the head of the bed and a small memorandum book beside the body.

They then began the work of preparing a grave. The soil was loose and sandy, and taking turns with the shovel, they soon completed the task.

When the body had been reverently lowered, Duncan repeated the solemn burial service, the boys standing by with uncovered heads and responding to the familiar words in hushed and serious accents.

Thus was the unknown dead buried on an unknown shore, by friends to him unknown in life. But the solemn service in which they joined held up before them a hope and assurance not unknown to them, for the body was committed to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come."

## CHAPTER X.

**A**T NOON the workers in the garden returned to the camp for dinner. Duncan and his party had not made their appearance, and many questions were asked and conjectures volunteered as to where they had gone.

"I shouldn't wonder if they had gone to find some stones to build Mr. Duncan's forge with," ventured Walter.

"There are plenty of stones around here," answered Willie; "and besides, how could they bring a great lot of stones from a distance?"

"That's so, they couldn't," assented Walter. "They must have gone prospecting for something, though."

"Duncan was mighty non-committal about it when they started," said Tom; "for Jim and I were here and we asked him where they were going, and he laughed and said they were going to search for hidden treasures."

"He didn't propose to gratify your curiosity, Tom," said Richard; "and I think he was right. You and Jim were here loafing about the camp when you ought to have been at work with the rest of us."

"Haven't we been at work, I should like to know?" asked Tom sharply.

"Oh, yes, after a fashion. You came up after we had been hard at it for about two hours, and then you had to go to the great rock for a drink every few minutes. I never saw such thirsty fellows in my life."

"Well, I don't care, I'm not used to such work. I'm no clodhopper like you."

"I don't think your epithets are very becoming just now, Tom," answered Richard.

"Not becoming! Humph! I should like to know why. You think you can talk as you please to everybody just because Duncan asked you to take charge of the garden. You can't boss me, I'll tell you that, and I don't propose to take any of your lip, either."

"I'm only telling you the truth, Tom. You've been as lazy as you could be all the morning, and I've had to do half of your work over again."

"I say that's a—it isn't any such thing, now."

"It is, though, and you might as well admit it; everybody here knows it."

"Look here, Dick Stockland, I don't propose to be bullied by you."

"Pshaw, Tom! Don't be silly—it's bad enough to be lazy."

"Say that again if you dare!"

"Say what?"

"That I am lazy."

"Well, I must confess that I believe you are, and that you've proved it to-day!"

"I won't take that from any such sneak as you!" cried Tom, springing up and rushing fiercely at Richard, who quickly rose to meet him. But he did not reach the object of his resentment, for Ransom quietly interposed his foot, and Tom tripped and fell on his face amid the laughter of the whole assembly. This only increased his anger, but instead of carrying out his intention, he returned to his seat, flushed and mortified.

"You can all laugh if you want to," he remarked sullenly, "but I can tell you one thing: Dick has got to take it back, or this thing doesn't end here. I want you all to understand that," he added, trying to assume a very injured and dignified air.

"Write a challenge, Tom—I'll be your second," laughed Ransom.

"Yes, you tripped me up on purpose, you know you did, Rans Storey, and I'm not going to forget that, either," answered Tom hotly.

"Of course," returned Ransom; "wouldn't do to have things done in that irregular fashion—must be according to the code! Write your challenge in due form; let Dick choose weapons—would suggest shovels, considering the nature of the quarrel—time, sunrise to-morrow morning!"

"I think," said Richard, laughing, "that if

we are going to settle the matter in that way we had better be about it, for Tom's heat will all evaporate before to-morrow morning."

"That's about as much as you know about me," answered Tom. "I don't forget so easily. And you'll find, if I don't like to dig with an old spade like a Paddy, I'm not too lazy to meet you in a fair field and give you about as much as you'll want to do into the bargain."

"Arrah!" cried Pat. "A Paddy is it? Wan thing ye forget, Mither Tom. It's the man that digs wid the shpade that swings the shillalah wid success. Thim same goes together."

This raised a laugh at Tom's expense, and he began to look rather sheepish.

"Well," he said, "Dick has got to take it back, that's all."

"Come, Dick, take it back and make peace," said Isaac.

"All right," laughed Richard; "I'm perfectly willing to admit that I ought not to have said what I did because Tom is so touchy; but I really think he and Jim both ought to admit that the rest of us worked hard all the morning, while they took it easy. Isn't that so, Jim?"

"Oh, I guess so," replied James, unconcernedly. "I don't like to work very well, and I don't care who knows it. I think Tom is foolish to make such a fuss over what you said."

"Oh, it's all right now," said Tom, glad of an excuse to drop the matter. "He has apologized and I shall let it pass. But I don't know whether I shall go to work again this afternoon or not. I don't have much faith in the idea of a garden, anyhow."

Reilly now took his kettle off the fire and added his last skillet of fish to the number he had already fried and piled up, in rather ungentle fashion, on the top of a cracker box.

While they were eating Ransom said aside to Richard:

"Seems to me your quarrel with Tom was entirely unnecessary, Dick."

Richard flushed as he responded:

"Well, perhaps that's so; but I never dreamed he was going to be so fiery."

"But when you did find it out you ought to have stopped; but you didn't, and if I hadn't tripped him up you would have come to blows."

"I acknowledge it, Rans, and I'll know better in future. But here come the other hunters. Hello, Hen! Where are your otters?"

"Over on the shore," answered Henry quietly.

"Why didn't you bring them home?"

"How could we bring eight great otters?" replied Marshall. "We wanted some dinner as well as the rest of you; and I guess you wouldn't be sitting there asking such foolish questions if you'd had the hard tramp we have."

"Did you kill eight?" asked James.

"Yes," replied Henry; "I shot six and Marsh two. They're as thick as wasps in a garret."

"Buster happened to get the best position every time," said Marshall.

"That's what you kept saying," returned Henry, "but I gave you four shots and you missed three of them."

"That's your version, but I choose to look at it differently," retorted Marshall.

"Buster can beat any of us with the rifle; you might as well acknowledge that," said James.

"Well, I don't. But I want something to eat—I'll acknowledge that. I say, Paddy Pat, pass over some of your stew, and I'll take a couple of those fish."

"Aisy, aisy, Mither Watt!" answered Pat good-naturedly: "politeness is politeness, av Mither Duncan is wid us or not; ye can help yourself."

"Duncan? Pshaw! What difference does his absence make, I should like to know? I don't believe in knuckling under to him just because he claims authority over us. He hasn't any more right to boss here than I have."

"You know better than that," cried Walter; "and if you don't, the rest of us do."

"I guess I know my own business, young jack-anapes. Duncan is only a student, if he does teach you youngsters, and I'm going to let him know that he can't order me around. The rest of you may knuckle under to him if you want to, but I'm going to assert my independence hereafter."

"I advise you not to continue in that strain, Watt," said Richard quietly.

"Why not, Mr. Stockland?"

"Because it would be more manly to wait till Duncan comes back and say it to his face; but you dare not do that."

"Ho! Dare not!" replied Marshall, contemptuously. "You needn't think I'm afraid to do it, and I shall one of these days, when there is any occasion."

"Then wait for the occasion, but don't say any more now, because Duncan has some friends here."

"Oho, Mr. Stockland! You propose to be his lordship's champion, do you? I am not afraid of your high mightiness, either."

Ransom pressed Richard's foot to remind him of his prudent resolution, and Richard wisely refrained from making any reply.

Shortly afterwards the boys returned to their work. Reilly remained behind a few minutes to put things in order. Tom showed no disposition to go, and none of the boys said anything to him about it. As they were leaving, Richard turned to Henry and Marshall and said:

"I suppose you fellows will skin the otters this afternoon."

"You do!" answered Marshall snappishly.

"What put that into your head?"

"That was the understanding when you undertook to shoot them."

"According to Duncan's *ipse dixit* it may have been, but I don't recognize his authority. I'm going fishing this afternoon, and I guess you'll be willing to eat a few of the fish."

"All right! Go fishing then, if you want to be a drone and let the rest of us do all the hard work. It's easy enough to fish, and you know we've had more than we could eat. There's no need of catching them to throw away."

Richard then left them. The three boys sat

in silence for some time, finishing their dinner. Pat soon left, and then a consultation began about the best place to try their luck with the hook and line. But Henry did not enter into it with his usual enthusiasm. He was not quite pleased with the spirit Marshall had shown. He was at heart thoroughly loyal to Duncan, and although quite as averse to labor and restraint as Marshall or Thomas, he had a very generous disposition and was ready at all times to yield to the wishes of others.

After listening for some time to the proposals without making any reply, he found courage to speak what was in his mind.

"I'll tell you what we had better do," he said; "we'd better go and skin those otters, first. It won't take us long—three of us—and then we can go down to the eastern shore of the bay where I'm certain we can find some gray trout. We've had enough of those yellow perch and bass, and a great many have been thrown away, as Dick said."

"To skin those otters isn't going to be so easy a job as you seem to think," returned Marshall. "No, I'll stick to my word and not touch one of them. They may stay where they are, and Duncan may get somebody else to do that sort of work for him."

"But, Marsh, we must acknowledge that someone has got to do it; and it is true, as Dick said, that it was understood we should skin them. I really think we are under obligations to do it."

"Pshaw! That's all in your eye. I had no intention of skinning any otters when we started out. We are our own masters here, and this work is all humbug. Duncan is an old foggy, and that's the explanation of it all. What's the use of a forge and sawmill? It's altogether too much parade over a very simple matter. Let Ike take his vessel to pieces and build a little one, large enough to take us home. That's all we want."

"That's just the whole case in a nutshell," echoed Tom. "We can't help Ike's loss and ought not to be held responsible for it. I for one don't intend to turn day-laborer to put money in his pocket."

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted Henry impatiently; "he don't ask you to. The fact is, Ike can about as easily rebuild his old vessel as to make a smaller one, because he has his framework all ready and the iron work, and lots of other things that he would have to refit and remake, if he changed the size. But suppose he couldn't; haven't we got enough manliness and generosity about us to stay here a little bit longer and help him, so that he needn't lose everything he owns on our account? I think it would be mean for us to leave him in the lurch, myself. But then, the vessel isn't what we're talking about. I am going to take the hides off those otters and bring them home, and if you fellows don't want to help me you needn't."

"Go ahead then," said Marshall. "I don't envy you your job, that's all. Come on, Tom, we'll go and get a few gray trout for a change."

The two took their hooks and lines and started

off, leaving Henry sitting alone by the fire, where he sat for some time reflecting upon the course it was best to pursue. The task before him now began to assume very large proportions in his mind.

"It was mean of them to leave me to do that job alone," he said to himself. "If there were only a couple of the others I wouldn't mind, but eight—cracky! It'll take four solid hours. And then, I could never bring them home. I know what I'll do—I'll go and get one of the other boys to help me."

A few minutes later the laborers in the garden were surprised to see him slowly approaching across the glade. As he drew near, Ransom remarked to Richard:

"Another penitent coming! Jim shows wonderful improvement, and here comes Buster. Marsh and Tom will convert the whole crowd, yet!"

"Are you going to lend us a hand, Buster?" asked Richard.

"No; that is, not now. I've got to skin those otters, and I want one of you fellows to come and help me. You see, one can't handle so many very well."

"Have Marsh and Tom deserted?"

"Yes; they've gone fishing. They wanted me to go, but I wouldn't."

"I'll go," cried James, glad of an excuse to drop his spade.

"All right, Jim, go ahead!" said Richard. "I expect Duncan 'll want those hides right away."

It was past seven o'clock when James and Henry returned to camp with nine large and beautiful otter skins, Henry having shot another that afternoon. Soon afterwards Marshall and Thomas came in with a large string of trout and whitefish. The others had come from the glade tired and hungry, and were resting while they awaited Reilly's summons to the evening meal.

"I wonder why Mr. Duncan and the others don't come back," remarked Walter.

"They probably took a longer tramp than they expected," said James.

"I'm afraid something has happened to them. We don't know how many Indians there are on this island," returned Walter.

"I have no fears about Indians," remarked Richard, "but I do begin to feel a little anxious about Duncan's party. They had no idea of being gone so long. I know, for he told me he expected to help us this afternoon."

"It isn't dark yet," said Henry, "and there's plenty of time for them to turn up yet."

"Well, if they don't come by the time we're through supper, I shall insist on starting out in search of them; for something unusual must have happened to them, or they would have been here before this."

Accordingly, when supper was over, several boys volunteered to go with Richard. They were on the point of starting, when Pat came rushing into the stockade in a state of great excitement, carrying an empty pail which he had taken to the bay to fill with water, and shout-

ing excitedly at the very top of his big voice: "A vessel! A vessel in the offing, Captain Ike! Arrah! Ye'll have no made of your saw-mill and blackshmidt shop now. It's rescued yez are, young gentlemen!"

"Vessel! A vessel!" cried all in great surprise; and down they rushed to the shore of the little bay to see the incoming stranger.

Sure enough, there was a sail making its way slowly in between Shipwreck Island and the peninsula opposite. The twilight was creeping on apace, and while the sail could be distinctly seen, the hull was scarcely visible in the shadow of the island.

Isaac looked at the stranger critically for a moment, and said:

"That looks like a small sail for a fishing smack of any size, though probably she has reefed her mains'l. I wish I could get a good look at her hull, but that point shuts her off. She's hugging the land mighty close, but she's a lugger and I presume some flat-bottomed affair. Them fellows can lay right up to land, almost."

Walter, who had been sent back to bring the glass, now returned with it, and Isaac carefully examined the approaching vessel by its aid.

"She's coming out of the shadow of the point, now," he said, "and in a minute I can tell what she is. There she is now! Oh! She's only a canoe with a lug sail!"

"A canoe!" exclaimed Henry; "then there are Indians in it."

"A canoe proves nothing," said James. "That isn't a bark canoe. Ike don't mean that, do you, Ike?"

"No; all boats of that build are called canoes, and white men use 'em more than Indians."

"Not necessarily in this region, Ike," replied Marshall. "There are probably more Indians in this part of the country than white men."

"I doubt it," said James. "You said the other day that the railroad ran near the northern shore of this lake."

"I know it; and it probably runs through a wilderness full of Ojibways."

"A few scattered bands—lazy, dirty and half civilized," remarked Ransom.

"I believe that's a band of Indians coming," said Tom, "for we have seen one, and he probably belonged to the same tribe that these do."

"And the reason why we haven't seen him again," added Marshall, "is probably because he went to rejoin his band. They may have taken Duncan and his party prisoners, and now are coming to attack us because we have a reduced force."

"They may be Indians," said Richard, "but if they are they're probably coming to trade, not to fight."

"But can't you see, Dick, that they are keeping under cover?" asked Henry. "We can't see a soul in the boat."

"That's because she's got a lug sail," answered Isaac. "It's in her bow and spreads out both ways, and of course we can see nothing astern. If it wasn't so dark we might make out what sort of people are in her, but in this twi-

light we can't see a thing under the sail."

"I think it's pretty clear they're lying low," persisted Henry.

"That's clear enough," assented Marshall; "anyhow, I mean to give them a shot when they get near enough."

"A shot! No, you won't!" answered Isaac quickly.

"I won't! You'll see. I'd like to know who made you captain over me."

"I'm captain enough to prevent any such foolishness."

"But just across her bow, Ike! What harm would that do?" asked Henry.

"That's what I mean," said Marshall; "a shot across her bow will make them show their colors, and I mean to give 'em one, too."

"You won't do it if we can prevent it," declared Richard.

"Help yourself if you can, Mr. Stockland! You'll find you can't bully me as you tried to Tom Hendry this morning. I've got a right to fire when I please, and you and Ike Wilkins can't prevent it."

"But you have no right to insult those strangers and endanger our safety," answered Richard sharply. "Don't you know that a shot might turn them into enemies? They may be of great service to us in some way. How do we know but that we can send a message home by them?"

"Come, Marsh," said Henry, "Dick's right about that—it would be better not to provoke them. Perhaps, after all, we can arrange a friendly alliance without a fight."

"Of course I'm right," added Richard.

"Oh, of course; you always are," sneered Marshall; "but your head is swelled up a little too big, that's all!"

"Never mind about that," returned Richard; "my head is level enough to prevent your firing at friendly visitors, like a South Sea Islander. We are not quite savages yet, I hope."

"You are not, of course! But you'd better find out what has become of Duncan and his friends before you feel too certain about these Indians being friendly."

"That's so," echoed Tom; "where are they, unless these savages that are coming have taken them prisoners, or else killed them?"

Richard could not answer this question and made no reply. Duncan's continued absence perplexed and distressed him. The coming of the strange boat had diverted attention from the intended search, but he was fully determined to start out as soon as the purpose of the approaching visitors could be ascertained. He stood in silence watching the canoe, its square sail and the deepening twilight rendering it impossible to see how many or of what character were its occupants.

Marshall, meanwhile, quietly changed his position. He was determined to carry out his threat, if only to have his own way and thwart Richard and Isaac, whose interference he angrily resented.

Isaac keenly observed his every motion, equally determined to prevent any hostile demon-

stration; but Marshall was too quick for him. He waited quietly until the canoe was within hailing distance, then suddenly raised his rifle and fired, his bullet striking the water within a

Richard, his voice trembling with indignation. "Give me my rifle!" demanded Marshall, white with rage.

"No," answered Isaac firmly, "you can't have it till you know how to use it as a man should."

Marshall continued angrily to repeat his demand, but he saw by the indignant looks of the boys that all, but Tom were against him.

Their attention was now drawn to the boat, which in answer to the shot had swung abruptly around, and a voice demanded in stern accents:

"Who fired that shot?" It was Duncan's voice!

The boys instantly raised a shout of welcome, but in their excitement forgot to answer Duncan's question.

"Who fired that shot?" he demanded again.

"You may tell him if you want to," Marshall said, biting his lip in anger and mortification.

"We'll have to, of course," answered Richard; and he shouted to Duncan. "It was Marsh, but he thought you were a band of Indians."

Duncan made no reply, and his companions also remained silent, while the boat swung around again and resumed her course.

The boys felt deeply grieved over the incident, and Marshall, to do him justice, regretted it bitterly. It cast a damper over their joy at the safe return of their companions, and the grim silence maintained in the boat seemed to many of them to have a rather ominous aspect.

All now ran around the shore to meet the canoe at the landing, Marshall and Thomas following more slowly behind.

Great was their surprise when a large St. Bernard dog suddenly sprang up and placed his forepaws on the edge of the boat, watching them with apparently

few feet of the boat. Instantly Isaac and Richard sprang forward and wrenched the smoking piece out of his hands.

"You'll have to answer for this, Marsh!" said

as great and lively an interest as that with which they observed him. He was the first to spring ashore, and soon made friends with them all.



"You'll have to answer for this, Marsh!" said Richard.

## CHAPTER XI.

AFTER Duncan and his companions had partaken of some refreshment, all gathered around the fire in eager expectation to hear him relate the adventures of the long, eventful day.

"We were too hungry and exhausted," he began, "when we landed, to answer so many questions."

"We thought it was on account of the shot," interrupted Walter.

"Well, I confess we were very much startled and irritated at first at the greeting we received; but of course we knew the shot would not have been fired had you known who were coming. But it was a very dangerous proceeding, for some of us might have been hit; and had we been strangers, as you supposed, it might have given great offence and got us into serious trouble. But I am sure such an occurrence will not happen again. Now for my story. We have had a melancholy experience to-day, but we have discovered, I think, the owner of the mysterious footsteps and the identity of our late midnight visitor."

He then related what has already been told in a previous chapter.

"When we had filled up the grave," he went on, "we cut down a tree and hewed out a slab for a headstone, on which Samuel carved a rude inscription. We then examined the notebook very carefully, to see if it contained anything more that we ought to put on the slab. From it we learned that the unfortunate man was connected with a mission among the Indians, and that he was in the habit of sailing in his canoe to distant points on certain days, accompanied only by his faithful dog Felix."

"Oh, is his name Felix?" cried Willie, running to the dog and patting him affectionately.

"Yes," said Duncan, "his name is Felix—a name of happy omen—and a true and devoted friend has he been to his unfortunate master. We found but two entries in the notebook that seem to have been made on the island. The first describes how the poor man came here. It is dated Tuesday, the sixth of June, the day we sailed. It seems that on the morning of the previous Saturday, while attempting to reach a distant settlement, he lost his bearings in a dense fog, and when at last the atmosphere cleared there was no land in sight. The sky was overcast and continued so for several days, and he wandered hopelessly astray. He could find no sign to tell him the points of the compass, and sailed for two days, as he found at last, in the wrong direction. One morning he was overjoyed to discover a point of land about two miles distant. He summoned all his remaining strength and paddled his canoe to the sandy beach, there being no wind to fill his sail, and started out on foot to find some human habitation. How great must have been his disappointment when at last he discovered that what he had supposed to be a peninsula, was but a small island in mid-lake! He returned to the beach and built the rude hut where we found his body,

intending to attempt the homeward voyage as soon as the weather would permit. But he was already ill. Fatigue, exposure, anxiety and probably want of suitable food were the causes that brought on the illness from which he died."

"He must have had pneumonia or typhoid fever, or something," said Henry.

"It was dreadful enough under the circumstances, whatever it was," remarked James.

"And it ought to set us all to thinking," added Richard; "for although we have the blessing of companionship and plenty to eat—"

"Such as it is," interrupted James.

"Such as it is," repeated Richard—"which ever you mean, the companionship or the food—although we have both, we have no accommodations for the sick; and I tell you, it would go hard with us if two or three should be taken down with a fever."

"That is true," replied Duncan; "and it behooves us to be very careful of our health. But let us return to the unfortunate stranger, for what follows is of special interest in view of the mystery that has been perplexing us. The next and last entry in the book was evidently written with great difficulty just before he died, for it is little better than a scrawl and was left unfinished. This is what he wrote:

"I am writing in a faint hope that someone may find this after I am gone and send it to my friends, whose address is on the first page. I am very ill, and unless there is a change soon cannot last long. I must have lost my reason for a time, for there is a great blank, and much that I remember is confused. I found myself wandering in the woods one night and wondered where I was. I started to find my way to the mission, but fell to the ground very ill and exhausted. Something brushed my face; it was Felix, my faithful friend. I longed for water, burning with fever, but he could not bring it to me. Then all was gone from me, and I remember no more until I found myself again, that time lying by a stream of water, and I drank and drank of it. Oh, how refreshing! And then the terrible truth dawned upon me and I knew where I was—on this solitary island alone; but how long I could not tell, nor can I now. I managed to crawl back to my hut of boughs, to die here all alone. It seems to me as though sometimes some friend had brought me water; but no, it can be only a dream, for I am alone in this dreadful place—and yet not alone, for God—"

"This is all," said Duncan, looking up from the book. "The diary ends here. It is evident he could write no more. His hand dropped the book, which we found by his side, and the pencil fell to the ground where we picked it up."

"The last word he wrote was the name of God," remarked Richard solemnly.

"Yes," replied Duncan, "and he 'committed himself into the hands of a faithful Creator.'"

"I agree with Dick," said Isaac, "that it ought to set us to thinking, for we don't know who's our best friend till we've called on that name."

"That's so, Ike," said Henry; "but where



do you suppose he went that night he found himself by the water?"

"That's perfectly plain," answered Carl. "That was probably the night we saw him; for he lay down and drank right out of the channel, and afterwards Frank saw him wade into the water up to his waist."

"Then he didn't crawl back to his hut, as he wrote in his diary, for Frank says he ran off in a hurry," said James.

"That's so, he did," admitted Carl; "but perhaps he didn't come entirely to himself till afterwards, and then he was probably weak and crawled the rest of the way."

"Pshaw, Carl! That's a likely idea! You don't mean to say that poor sick man tramped two miles and a half!"

"Certainly; he had unnatural strength, Jim. Don't you know that a person out of his head is stronger than at other times? It's when he comes to himself that he is weak."

"But where was his dog? Did you see anything of Felix that night?"

"No; but the dog was probably running about in the woods, hunting for game."

"Did the man have on moccasins?" James asked again, after a moment's reflection.

"No," answered Sam; "he had on shoes."

"Then of course he never made those foot-steps at the great rock."

"He might," replied Carl, "for we found a pair of moccasins in his satchel."

"If he was getting up in the night," said Will, "and wandering about crazy, there's no knowing what he did or where he went. He might have put on his moccasins and gone out; who knows?"

"Well, then," returned James, "all I have to say is, that if he changed his shoes to go out, there was a good deal of method in his madness."

"There may have been method of a certain kind, Jim," said Richard, "for if he was laboring under some hallucination he might think it necessary to put on his moccasins, or he might act from force of habit."

"Certainly," assented Duncan. "It does not seem at all unreasonable to me to suppose he did so, or that he could walk the whole length of the island. I do not think it follows, however, that either night mentioned in his diary (for there may have been two) was necessarily the same night that Carl and Frank saw him. We do not know how many times he wandered in a state of mental aberration, or what his physical condition may have been at such times. His diary simply gives us a clue, without accurately describing his condition or his movements. He had very confused ideas of what he had been doing. His dreadful situation undoubtedly preyed upon his mind and upset it, so that he was really insane excepting at certain brief intervals. When he put on his moccasins and went out, as I think he must have done, he was probably pursuing some imaginary idea and acting from force of habit; or, he may have had them on at first and changed to his shoes, while laboring under some hallucination. It is cer-

tainly a great relief to me to feel that we are to be no longer perplexed and disturbed by the nocturnal visits of a mysterious being, who eludes our vigilance and keeps us constantly on the watch."

"You are a regular doubter, Jim," laughed Will; "aren't you sometimes doubtful about your own identity?"

"No; I have ample proof of that. But let Duncan go on; we want to hear the rest."

"There is very little more to relate," said Duncan. "Our next move was to find the unfortunate man's boat. Felix was again our guide, for as we started toward the beach he led the way to the bank of a little cove, where we found the canoe with sail, paddles and everything complete. We bailed her out and sailed for home. You know the rest."

"But why did you come in on the east side of Shipwreck Island?" asked Richard. "Your natural course, coming from the west, would have been through the narrows."

"Because we had a very careful navigator," replied Duncan, smiling. "Carl was our captain, and he refused to venture among the rocks and shoals that seemed to block our way in that direction. The number of rocks all along that southern shore is something marvelous. That may account for the fact that vessels seem to avoid this region."

At this instant Felix, lying by the fire apparently asleep, suddenly raised his head and pricked up his ears, as though listening to some distant sound.

"What's in the wind, old fellow?" said Frank, reaching forward and patting the dog.

Felix wagged his tail and continued to listen attentively. Then he began to growl and sprang to his feet.

This attracted the attention of all the boys, who began to listen also, but they could hear nothing but the sighing of the wind and the rustling of the leaves. The dog also seemed to hear no more, for he changed his position and lay down again.

"There must be something prowling around outside," said Henry; "it may be a wolf or bear. Let's go out and see what it is."

"Let us see whether the dog hears it again," answered Duncan.

Felix did hear it again, for he soon began to growl louder than ever and then sprang to his feet, as though determined this time to ferret out the mystery. Running to one side of the stockade, he made the entire circuit of the enclosure, seeking some means of egress.

"Let me get my rifle!" cried Henry excitedly; "I'll have a shot at Mr. Prowler."

"It's only a mink or something of that sort, probably," said James.

"A dog don't growl that way at small game, Jim," replied Frank; "he goes for it fast enough, and barks, perhaps, but he growls only at an enemy worthy of his steel."

"That's so," said Richard; "it must be some larger game than we've seen yet."

"Open the door there, Sam!" cried Henry. "Let the dog out! I'm ready now, and I'll

put a bullet through that fellow, whatever he is."

"No, sir!" objected Willie stoutly, "don't you open that door! Do you want Felix to go out there and have a fight with some great wild beast?"

"Shall we open the door, Duncan?" asked Sam.

Duncan hesitated. Meanwhile Felix growled and barked more fiercely than ever, demanding to be let out.

"Well," said Duncan, "open the door and we will all go out with the dog. I don't want any harm to come to him, but I think we can soon dispatch any animal that may be about."

No sooner said than done. The rude gate swung upon its wooden hinges and Felix darted out, followed by all the boys. He began instantly to run about in all directions with his nose to the ground, searching for a scent. He led them to the west side of the stockade and a moment later struck the trail, and dashing off, disappeared in the woods.

The whole party followed as rapidly as they could, but Felix left them far behind. They climbed the terrace and there caught sight of him in the moonlight bounding across the glade, heading for the creek. Then they heard the deep tones of his bark, and as they approached the stream they could see him dodging about in every direction in search of the lost trail. The object of their pursuit had evidently taken to the water, but whether he had gone up-stream or down, or crossed to the other side, was a question they could not determine.

"Do you think it could be a bear, Mr. Duncan?" asked Willie as they stood on the bank discussing the subject.

"I am sure it was a bear," cried Henry from the opposite bank, where he had gone to continue the search; "I know well enough it was, for no animal but a bear would give us such a chase as that, in my opinion."

"I had thought," said Duncan in answer to Willie's question, "that there were no large animals on the island; but it seems now that there must be, for that some animal of considerable size has been prowling about our camp is clear. We need no better proof than the unerring instinct of this intelligent dog. And I should say it is more likely to be a bear than any other large animal."

They now returned leisurely to camp. On their arrival at the stockade door Felix suddenly stopped, and uttering a bark, bounded off again, this time in the direction of the bay. Surprised by this unexpected action, they all followed, and on reaching the shore they found him running about in search of the scent, again baffled by the cunning of his enemy. The trail ended at the water's edge.

"It must have been an otter this time," said Frank.

"But otters are too short-legged to travel on land that way, Burton," answered William.

"They do it, though, sometimes, when they're hungry; isn't that so, Rams?"

"Certainly; otters travel long distances on

land sometimes in search of food, if it isn't plenty near by. But there seems to be no scarcity of it in and around this bay."

"I hope you are right, Frank," said Duncan, "and that it may prove that we have been chasing otters both times, though I am afraid we have a more formidable animal to deal with."

This was said as they entered the stockade. Pat closed the door and barred it and then went into the storehouse, as was his habit before retiring, to see that everything was in order. In an instant he appeared at the doorway and shouted:

"Och! It's the avil wan himself has got into the camp. Ochone! Av there's no safety for the food we ate, indade it's an avil case we're in."

"What's the matter? Is anything missing?" asked James.

"Missin'! Av they were not missin' it's kapin' shill I'd be. Ye'll have no ham any more, or dried bafe, and the crackers is all shpilled, and the coffee has been swalleyed up or carried off."

All ran to the storehouse and found it as Pat had said. Their only remaining ham was gone and the cracker box had been relieved of part of its contents, the remainder lying scattered about in great confusion. Further investigation showed that the room had been rummaged in a search for food, for boxes and barrels had been shoved out of their places and tipped over, and a large piece of dried beef had also disappeared. The canned goods, however, and fish had not been disturbed.

"No otter did this, that's certain," asserted James with emphasis.

"Of course," returned Richard, "an otter couldn't carry off a ham or tip over things in this shape."

"But a bear could," declared Henry, "and that's just what it was—I'm satisfied of that."

"I am afraid that is true," said Duncan. "This place looks very much to me as though a bear might have been rummaging about, hunting for something to satisfy his appetite." "Ah, but the coffee, Misher Duncan!" exclaimed Pat. "Does the loikes of him know how to stape coffee?"

"That's a poser, Duncan," said Frank; "but I rather guess your coffee will turn up yet, Pat. It has probably been shoved away out of sight somewhere."

"Bears don't use coffee as a beverage, that we know," said James; "and I think the same objection applies to the ham and dried beef, for they live on a vegetable diet."

"Granivorous animals," returned Ransom, "but also carnivorous when hard pressed for food. A bear could carry off a ham; they have been known to prey upon sheep and swine, especially in early times, carrying away squealing pigs in their arms, for a bear will walk on his hind legs with his arms full. This one has evidently had a meal out of our hard crackers, which were perhaps better to his liking, but that he thought of providing for a rainy day is made equally plain by the absence of the

drief beef and ham as well as the coffee."

Duncan now suggested that as nothing could be done about their loss that night, and as all were very tired from the labors and excitement of the day, it would be best to make the stockade secure and retire.

"Shall we have a camp guard?" asked Richard.

"I think Felix will be the best guard we can have," answered Duncan.

"So he will," cried Willie, "and I will make him a bed right by the side of mine."

And so Willie, who had never felt quite secure since the appearance of the mysterious visitor, placed Felix by his side and abandoned all thought of danger, and for the first time in several days slept soundly all the night through.

## CHAPTER XII.

THREE quiet but busy weeks followed. The mystery of the storehouse robbery remained unsolved. It was the subject of frequent discussion, and finally the boys reached the conclusion that there must have been at least two bears prowling about the camp on the night in question, one of which fled to the creek as soon as a stir was made, while the other retired a short distance in an opposite direction unnoticed by the dog, and during their absence returned and entered the stockade. The storehouse had a doorway but no door, and there was nothing to hinder Bruin's free access to the larder when once he had ventured within the enclosure. This seemed to be the most reasonable explanation of the mystery, and even James, always a little inclined to be skeptical, admitted that the two trails leading in opposite directions implied two visitors; but he insisted that some of the facts in the case pointed to human agency in the theft.

"A bear," he said, "would have left marks of his footsteps in the sand at the beach, but a man would have stepped on stones and sticks so as to leave no track. Now, there isn't the slightest sign of a beast's footprint anywhere."

"There's a good reason for that," Richard replied to this, "for the sand at the beach was perfectly dry then. We hadn't had any rain for some time. I remember walking all around there the very next day, unloading some iron from the schooner, and you couldn't have told my tracks from those of an elephant."

"That speaks volumes for the size and shape of your feet, Dick!" laughed Will.

"But Jim, how do you account for the state of confusion left in the storehouse?" asked Frank.

"Couldn't a man have done it?"

"No; at least he wouldn't, unless he was a very stupid thief. He would have created as little confusion as possible. There wasn't the slightest need of shoving things around in that way, for the beef and ham, even the crackers—in fact, everything a thief looking for something to eat would want—were right in plain sight,

and any man would have been a fool to advertise his theft by leaving things in the shape we found them in. You don't like to give in, Jim, but I guess you'll have to this time, for the bear theory is the only one that fits all the facts."

"There's where your head is level, Frank," said Henry. "It was a bear, I'm satisfied of that; and it's a great pity we couldn't have had some idea of it before it happened, so as to have been on the watch. It wouldn't have taken me two seconds to have laid him low, and so saved the ham and added a couple of hundred weight or so of excellent meat to our stock of provisions."

"A slice of bear's steak would be the most convincing argument, wouldn't it, Jim?" asked Ransom.

"It would be proof, and that's all I ask," remarked James.

"You shall have it, Jim," cried Henry. "I'll bring Mr. Bruin into camp within the next ten days, and Mrs. Bruin too, and all the little Bruins, and so satisfy your mind and stomach all at once."

"Be sure you find them first, Buster," said James.

"And ye'll be afther killin' thim first, too, Misther Henry," added Pat, "for it's not meself would care to see any of the family here alive."

The subject was finally dropped, and as the days went by other things claimed the attention of the boys. Duncan, meanwhile, often cautioned them against venturing far into the woods unarmed and alone, and particularly urged the importance of saving their ammunition for possible emergencies.

Marshall and Thomas, however, paid but little attention to any of his requests, and he plainly saw that they were likely to become anything but useful members of the community. He greatly feared their influence over some of the others, particularly Henry and James; but the danger of this was far less than he imagined.

Marshall could not have chosen a surer way to incur Henry's displeasure than by opposition to Duncan. Henry's great fault, aside from his dislike of anything in the form of work, was a habit of braggadocio; but it was usually harmless, and his great good-nature and kindly generosity made him a general favorite. While strongly attached to Duncan and heartily approving of all his plans, he yet made no effort to help them along, but spent his time in scouring the woods in search of the bear's den. To meet and vanquish the common enemy, he declared, would be the greatest service he could render the community.

With James the case was of quite another complexion. He was no sportsman, and after a few trials at fishing with Marshall and Thomas he grew tired of their company and began to loiter about the camp. Patrick entertained him with his droll humor and stories of Irish life, and remembering James' frequent complaints of the depleted larder, he shrewdly turned his attention to the garden, where a

vigorous growth of weeds was encroaching upon the now neglected crops. The sight of this aroused at once all of James' indignation and energies. He took hold of the garden with surprising vigor, and from that time his interest in it never wavered. He soon began to take pleasure in keeping it in order and watching the growth of the corn and vegetables.

The boys were delighted with this sudden change in him, and by unanimous consent placed the garden in his entire charge, conferring upon him no less a title than that of "Secretary of Agriculture."

Duncan's suggestion of a government had been carried out with great enthusiasm. Some of the measures proposed were a trifle absurd, but as the boys were in earnest and evidently anxious to bring about the results he sought, he gave them every encouragement and good-naturedly accepted the office they proffered him, which was that of "President of the Island Republic." All were "members of Congress," the whole camp constituting a single legislative body which met every Saturday afternoon. Besides the Congress there was a committee of four called "the Cabinet," who shared with Duncan some of the responsibilities of the Executive, two of whom were appointed by him and two elected by the boys. Duncan had chosen Isaac and Richard, and after a sharp contest William and Samuel were duly elected on the part of Congress.

Meanwhile, under the general direction of Duncan and his Cabinet, the various "public works" were carried forward with great energy. The fact that they were now under the control of the government lent a new interest to them and inspired their promoters with greater zeal.

Carl and Sam were commissioned to experiment in pottery, and after many trials and failures they succeeded in producing some very heavy and clumsy, but strong and durable earthenware. Patterns were laboriously shaped out of some blocks of basswood, and a clay sediment having been prepared, the vessels were moulded into proper shape and baked in Patrick's fireplace. In the course of ten days they manufactured a large supply of kettles, plates, pans and bowls, which Pat declared were worth their weight in gold.

While all this was going on, Duncan had his brickyard and limekiln in full operation. A quantity of limestone had been burnt, producing an excellent quality of lime, and several thousand brick had been moulded and baked from the bed of clay of which the pottery was made.

But the question of transportation was still unsettled. A straight roadway had been cleared and a rough cart built; but as the wheels of the cart were made by sawing off the end of a log, one of them split in two under the weight of the first load of brick, breaking the axle as it fell; and the loaded vehicle lay, idle and useless, about midway between the brickyard and the camp.

Meanwhile Isaac had not been idle, but with the help of Richard and Frank had done a

great work at the falls, although it had taken him a longer time than he had expected. As there was no opportunity to build a dam, he decided to use the natural fall as his motive power. First bridging the stream with logs where he proposed to erect his mill, so as to place his saw on a direct line with the fall, he built a large water-wheel and a heavy frame to support it, placing the frame in the best position to get the full force of the descending torrent.

When this was accomplished, only one thing more remained to be done before building his carriage and placing his saw in the right position, and that was to raise his wheel to the proper place on the frame. This was a rather difficult piece of engineering and required a large force of hands, for the wheel was large, and being built of green timber, was heavy in proportion to its size.

One Saturday morning all hands repaired to the falls to assist in placing the wheel on the frame. The novelty of the raising had an unusual charm for the boys, and they all gathered about the frame on the bridge in high spirits.

Isaac had prepared two large levers made of small trees trimmed of their branches, the butt ends of which were inserted under the wheel, which rested against the frame, and a large log was placed conveniently near for a fulcrum. Isaac and Richard then took their places on either side of the wheel to watch the progress of the movement and give the necessary directions.

When all was ready Isaac gave the word. The boys sprang upon the levers, bearing down with all their might, and up went the ponderous wheel. But their ardor came near costing some of them their lives. The wheel rose with a movement so sudden as to give it an impetus in the wrong direction, and it started to roll downwards upon the now depressed levers directly towards the boys.

Duncan and Richard shouted a warning, but some of them must have been inevitably caught and crushed to death beneath the tremendous weight, had not Isaac seized a heavy piece of timber as quick as thought and with a mighty effort thrown it directly in front of the descending wheel.

This served to divert it from its course. It rose upon the timber, toppled over to one side, fell off the levers, righted itself and rolled along the bridge to the bank of the stream, where it lodged against a rock.

So great was the surprise of all at the unexpected occurrence, which happened in an instant of time, that they stood silent and confused for nearly a minute.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Duncan as soon as he could trust himself to speak; "your lives are saved once more."

"That was a narrow escape," cried Will. "I thought Jim and Buster were goners, sure. They weren't a foot from the wheel when it went over."

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Frank. "It's all over now, and there's no use being glum about it."

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Carl.

"We've got our work all to do over again," answered Isaac.

"What was the trouble?" asked Henry; "what made the thing come rolling down that way?"

"You fellows pried her up too sudden," replied Isaac. "I meant to have you raise her slow, a few inches at a time, so Dick and I could block her up as fast as you went; but you all bore down like a triphammer and we didn't have no chance to do anything."

"Can't you fasten the wheel with ropes in some way, so as to guard against such an accident in future?" asked Duncan of Isaac.

"Yes," answered Isaac; "I'll put a guy on her this time, though it wouldn't be necessary if the boys wasn't in such a hurry. Now, the first thing to be done is to get her back where she was before. We'll have to use some lighter levers for that. Just clear away that timber there in front of the frame, some of you; and, Dick, let's have them small levers we had yesterday."

Isaac's orders were quickly obeyed, and in the course of half an hour the wheel stood again in front of the frame. Isaac tied a rope to the upper part, the other end of which was wound twice around a tree standing half way up the terrace, and Richard was sent to hold it and take up the slack as the wheel was raised by the levers.

The boys were very careful this time, and the raising was successfully done. The wheel now stood at the proper height, securely blocked to its position by heavy pieces of timber. The rope was then removed and again the smaller levers were applied, this time to roll it forward so that the axle would rest on the top of the frame. One strong effort was sufficient. The wheel continued to roll on the top timbers by the momentum thus given to it, until the axle sank into the sockets prepared to receive it. At the same instant the rushing torrent filled the buckets, and Isaac's water-wheel, so long the subject of universal interest and expectation, began to revolve with great rapidity.

"Three cheers for Ike and his wheel!" shouted Will, swinging his hat with great enthusiasm.

The boys all took up the shout and made the welkin ring with cheer after cheer.

"Well, Isaac, does it meet your expectations?" asked Duncan as soon as he could be heard.

"Yes, and more too," Isaac replied, his face beaming with gratification; "she runs faster than I expected. There's a big power in them falls."

"Yes, I think there is. I suppose I could attach a little triphammer to your wheel, if desired; at all events, I have decided to locate my shop at this place, so we shall be near neighbors."

"Aren't we advancing in civilization, though?" cried Will. "Just think—a blacksmith shop and sawmill! We shall have all the elegancies of a refined and cultured state, yet!"

"Quite right, Staples!" said Frank. "The refining influence of a sawmill is something astonishing. I was brought up in the neighborhood of one myself,—

"And the rhythmic flow of its measured strain Has left an impress on my youthful brain, That no lapse of time in the world's wild race, No battle of life, can ever efface."

"Ah, Burton, that is really delightful," drawled Ransom. "I am so gratified to hear you give expression to your pent-up feelings in such lofty sentiments! But your poetic soul needs a wider vent. Prepare a poem celebrating this auspicious event, and regale us with the sublime conceptions of your gigantic intellect!"

"I am at your service, Dr. Dryasdust," replied Frank, lifting his hat and bowing in mock gravity, "although I recognize the irony underlying your request. But I am consoled by the reflection that you belong to a former generation, living in the arid atmosphere of your antiquated folios, and therefore quite unable to appreciate the gush of the living present. Poetry is not my vocation, but, like Artemus Ward—a favorite author of mine—when I put my mind to it 'I can jerk a poem equal to any of them Atlantic Monthly fellers'! I have already anticipated your request, Doctor, and prepared a couple of verses celebrating this auspicious occasion. They are entitled 'The Swish of the Wheel,' and such as they are, they are at the service of this assembled crowd."

Frank then pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and read the following lines:—

"'Twas midnight on the moonlit lake, and all around was still;  
Not e'en a hare was wide-awake, no footstep trod the mill.  
Our noble youths, in Morpheus' arms, all slept in restful peace—

I wondered if no mortal charms could cause their snores to cease—  
When quickly to my startled ear was borne upon the air

A gentle noise, both far and near, vibrating here and there.

'Twas a wishy-washy sound  
Reverberating 'round—

As when fair maid, so coy and neat, on Foyle's delightful shore,  
Rinsed out her tub, her Pat to meet, in bygone days of yore.

"What's up? I cried; 'is aught awry? What means that swash below?'

A voice like Circe's siren cry replied in accents low,

'Tis but the wheel disturbs your rest; it turns while others sleep,

For Isaac's work will stand the test—it rolls to rolling keep.

He moved it once amidst your mirth, and now 'twill never cease,

For on it goes as rolls the earth, while all is hushed in peace.'

So the wishy-washy sound  
You're hearing all around,  
As when fair maid would rinse her tub, is  
naught but Isaac's wheel,  
Which constant turns upon its hub as I turn  
on my heel!"

"Arrah! cried Pat; "the fair maid is it, on Loch Foyle's delightful shore? Indade, av I was there I'd not be here, and it's meself would ask no more."

"Whe-e-w!" whistled Will, "how the muses abound this morning! Here is Frank growing sentimental over Isaac's water-wheel, and now Pat sighs in rhyme for his Biddy across the sea."

"Och! But it's not that I'm sayin' at all at all," replied Pat. "It's Loch Foyle I'll be sighin' for, and av I was there the day I'd lave Mistress Biddy scrub at her tub to her heart's content, would I."

"But, Frank, how did you happen to think all that up?" asked Walter. "I think it sounded real poetical and nice, myself."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied Frank, laughing. "I'll tell you how it all came about. A little circumstance about that wheel struck me quite forcibly the other day. You see, Ike has no mill-dam and no gate to shut off the flow of water, so, like the famous cork leg, the wheel once started, will never stop."

"Ha! Is that so, Ike? Can't you stop your wheel?" asked Carl.

"No," answered Isaac, smiling. "There ain't no stopping of her now. She'll run till the axle wears its way clean through them top timbers, I guess."

"How can you attach your machinery?" asked Duncan.

"Easy enough. We can put on the bands while she's in motion."

"What'll you make your bands of?" asked Sam.

"Otter skins, I guess. I shall want two stout ones, one for the saw, over that big band-wheel, fastened to the water-wheel, and another over this end of the axle that I've left for that purpose."

"I was wondering what you had left this end of the axle sticking out for."

"It's to run the carriage by. I shall put a band on it, and the other end will go over a small wheel right under it here, with some cogs; them cogs will work in some other cogs fastened on to a straight timber, and as the wheel turns, the timber will force the carriage along against the saw. You see, we have to keep crowding the log hard against the saw or else it won't cut."

"And when the log is cut clear through, what then?" asked Willie.

"Then we'll put this wheel out of gear and roll the carriage back again."

"All that is generally done by machinery," explained Richard, "but, of course, we can't have everything complete here in the wilderness."

"Certainly not," said Duncan, "but I think

it is quite wonderful that you have accomplished as much as you have. Our work will go on rapidly now, and I look forward to seeing our wrecked vessel soon in the stocks."

"The shtocks, is it!" cried Pat. "Arrah! Indade, it's meself will be glad to see that same. But it's afther shtockin' the shtomachs of these hungry b'ys that's ate us out of house and home av a shtop isn't put to their ravacious appetites, that we'll be afther doin' first; so, Captain Ike, av it's t'rough wid me ye are, I'll go and spread the table in the tint and l'ave the young gintlemen put themself's in the shtocks wid the rabbit and fish."

## CHAPTER XIII.

PAT hurried off to camp, while the others followed more slowly. Just as they came in sight of the stockade they saw him rush out of the gate and come running towards them with all his might, gesticulating wildly and shouting at the top of his voice:

"Ochone! It's the avil wan is in it! The avil wan is in it! Ochone!"

"What's in the wind, Pat?" asked Henry, who was foremost of the leading group.

"It's the ould wan himself," answered Pat, stopping short as the others approached. "Ochone! Trouble enough it is intirely we've had, wid the bears and Indians and shipwreck, but whin it comes to the inhabitants of the other worruld it's not meself can stand it."

"But tell us what the matter is," said Duncan.

"Indade, it's what I'm tellin' yez; it's the avil wan himself, didn't I say?" answered the excited Irishman, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"What have you seen in the stockade? Tell us that, and stop all this tomfoolery," said Isaac.

"Tomfoolery is it, Captain Ike? But ye'll not think so whin ye've come into the shtockade."

"What have you seen?" demanded Duncan.

"It's not what I've seen, but what I've not seen," returned Pat with provoking artlessness.

"Well, what have you not seen?" asked Frank.

"The ould b'y, I tell yez. Do yez think I'd be afther gazin' at him wid open mout' and eyes, whin there was a door behint me to get out at?"

"Pshaw! Let's go and find out for ourselves," said Richard, "for we shall make nothing out of him."

"Indade, ye're right, for it's not a swalley o' dinner yez'll be gettin' out o' me the day."

"Dinner? Is the dinner gone?" asked James.

"Ivery shcrap but the soup," returned Pat; "and av his nose has not been in that same I'll dhrink the whole of it meself."

"The bear! The bear!" shouted Henry, cocking his rifle and rushing forward with great precipitation.

"Ye'll not find the bear, Mistor Busther," Pat called out after him; "it's not the bear this toime, for no bear could get into the stockade."

"I don't know about that," replied Will; "a bear got in there before, you know."

"Ah, but the door was shut this toime. Av he got in he opened it wid the skill of a human."

"I'm afraid you didn't shut it very securely," said Richard.

"Yes, he did, Dick, for I was with him," said Walter. "He latched it on the inside and pushed the string through the hole. I know no beast could have opened that door."

"You're right, Walter me b'y," answered Pat; "and I found it as I left it. It's a hard toime I had to open it meself. I had to pull the string t'rough wid a twig."

They all rushed into the stockade and found the place had undoubtedly been visited in their absence. Pat had left a quantity of fish nicely fried and a number of rabbits cooked, all of which he had carefully covered with some heavy deep dishes, intending to put them over the fire again and have them hot for dinner. The covers had been pushed off the kettles and the rabbits and fish were all gone.

The soup had been covered with the top of a cracker box, and this cover had also been pushed aside and lay partly consumed in the fireplace. A few rabbit bones lay scattered about, showing that a part of the food had been eaten there.

The storehouse had also been disturbed, for scarcely a morsel of food was left in it. The dried beef and "hardtack," which Pat had saved for an emergency, were all gone. Nothing but a few crumbs were left in the bottom of the box, which lay on its side in the middle of the floor.

But the tent had not been visited at all, apparently, for everything remained just as it had been left. The boys inspected everything thoroughly, even looking into their valises and overhauling their blankets, determined to ascertain if there were any signs of human agency in the theft; for Pat's reiterated assertion and Walter's testimony as to the closing and fastening of the door, had served for the moment to shake the belief of many that a beast of any kind had invaded their camp.

After the search, all excepting Henry, who had gone outside to investigate, gathered around the fire and began to discuss the situation.

"The evidence is clear that that fellow wanted something to eat," said Frank; "and I rather think you'll have to abandon your theory of a supernatural visitor, Pat."

"Abandon, is it? And what for would I abandon it?" asked Pat. "How could a baste get into the stockade wid the door shut inside? Will ye tell me that? And whin he got in, how did he get out?"

"Well, one thing is certain," said Richard, "and that is, it was not an Indian."

"Nor a white man," added Sam; "for a white thief would have gone through our bags

and valises without a doubt, helping himself."

"And an Indian would have carried off some of our blankets and things," declared William.

At this instant Henry came running in, flushed with excitement.

"It was a bear," he cried, "as sure as the world; for I have found where he got in: He climbed the palisades over there in the corner. Come, I'll show you the marks he made with his claws."

They all followed Henry to the spot, which was on the outside of the stockade at the northeast corner, and there he pointed out some marks, evidently freshly made, where the bark had been scraped off one of the palisades.

After some discussion, Duncan said:

"I should say you were right, Henry, in supposing the thief was a bear, were it not for one thing. A bear can climb a tree or a piece of timber very readily, but when he descends a steep place he always goes backward. Now, if one should attempt to climb into our stockade he would have to balance himself on the top of those palisades in order to turn completely around, before he could descend to the ground on the other side. I cannot see how a bear could possibly do that."

"But the roof of the henhouse is just inside here," said Walter, "and it comes up almost to the top of the palisades. He probably stepped on to the roof and then backed down to the ground."

"True," answered Duncan; "I hadn't thought of that. Probably Bruin was the thief, after all."

"I know he was," replied Henry; "and I'm getting tired of his impudence. He will find he has come into this stockade once too often. He isn't going to baffle me again, for if I don't find him and punish him for his thievery within the next ten days, my name isn't Henry Manderson."

"Fshaw, Buster!" returned James; "you've said that before, and yet Mr. Thief continues to roam the forest and commit his depredations at will."

"He won't do it much longer, though, you'll see," retorted Henry.

"I think we ought to organize a crusade, and find the fellow, myself," said Carl. "Probably his den is somewhere on the northern shore among the cliffs. We have never explored that part of the island very thoroughly."

"You leave that to me, Slocum," answered Henry. "I'll hunt up Mr. Bruin's retreat; and when I find him once, he'll have to fork over enough meat for several dinners, to pay for the two he has stolen—you see if he doesn't."

They returned into the stockade, where they found Pat dishing out his soup. A brimming bowl of the hot liquid was placed before each of them, and the few crumbs left in the cracker box were equally divided between them all and piled in little heaps on their heavy earthen plates.

Isaac hastily swallowed his soup and went away to the falls. Notwithstanding their disappointment, the boys began their frugal meal

very cheerfully, and some were disposed to make merry over the situation.

"Fellows, we're in the soup now," cried Will.

"This is only the first course," said Richard.

"The bear's steak is coming after awhile."

"But we'd better make the most of the soup, Dick, as a certain state assemblyman did once," returned Frank.

"A certain state assemblyman! What about him?"

"Why, he wasn't accustomed to taking his meals in courses, you see, and so when he was invited to a state dinner on a certain occasion, he ate four plates of soup because he thought that was all they had! And when afterwards the duck and turkey were brought on, he was so full of soup he couldn't eat a thing!"

"That'll do for a story, Frank; but I know no man of sense ever did that."

"I didn't say he was a man of sense."

"Well, I hope for his sake it was better soup than this," remarked Marshall, "for this is as thin as water. Pat, why in the world didn't you put in something to thicken it? There isn't anything in it but salt."

"The rabbit was b'iled in it," answered Pat, "and that same will give yez a wa' bit taste of the mate. Will ye tell me what I'll be afther gettin' to thicken it wid? Av ye'll give me some potaties and vigitables I'll cook yez a stew that'll make your mout' water."

"That's just what this does, and nothing more," laughed William.

"We can't get any vegetables for a month yet," said James, "and what we shall do in the meantime for something palatable to eat is no joking matter, in my opinion. I confess I don't appreciate all your fun over the situation, myself."

"That's what I think," assented Marshall. "I think we've had enough of all this foolishness."

"What foolishness do you mean?" asked Richard.

"Not this joking, particularly, though it's of a piece with all the rest of it."

"What do you mean by 'the rest of it'?"

"If you want to know, Dick Stockland, I'll tell you," returned Marshall with some asperity. "I mean all this building of sawmills, and burning lime, and making brick. I think we ought to be making some arrangements to get away from here."

"That is what we are doing as fast as we can," answered Carl.

"Yes," said Richard; "and Marsh won't lift his finger to help us."

"No; and he doesn't intend to," retorted Marshall.

"We know that without your telling us," said Richard. "You and Tom don't like to soil your hands with work—that's where the trouble lies."

"That isn't so," answered Marshall, flushing angrily; "but I have my reasons, and my opinion is as good as yours. Tom and I are in a minority here, and you all want to bend us to your will, but you'll find we are not to be so easily bent."

"What would you have us do that we are not doing?" asked Duncan, pleasantly.

"I would have Ike build a smaller vessel out of his old material, for one thing."

"And so leave Ike in the soup as to his schooner," returned Frank. "You know we will never consent to that."

"I suppose not," answered Marshall; "but anyhow, whether the vessel be large or small, I think we ought to send a delegation to report our condition and get some help."

"How can we send a delegation?" asked Carl.

"In the canoe—the lugger, as you call it."

"But you know that isn't safe, Marshall," replied Duncan.

"I know Ike has said so, but he is an interested party. Of course he wants us to stay here and help him rebuild his vessel."

"Now that's a libel on Ike," cried Richard. "He would be just as glad to send tidings home as any of us. The fact is, there isn't one among us that feels as badly about our having to stay here, I believe, as Ike does."

"Of course he talks that way," Marshall replied, "because everything is done in his interest, and he wants to keep it so. That's why he says the canoe is unsafe."

"That isn't so, Marsh," said Carl. "Ike isn't that kind of a fellow at all. He's one of the most generous and good-hearted fellows that ever lived; and what he says about the lugger is true. I know something about boats myself, and I know that boat was never built for a heavy sea. She would swamp in a high wind. We had her out around the point the other day and she shipped water right along, and there was only a moderate breeze blowing. I don't believe she was built by a skilled boat-builder. Besides, you know she is an old, worn-out craft, anyhow."

"Then how did she ever stand it when that fellow was driven here in the storm?" asked Tom.

"He wasn't driven in a storm. He lost his bearings in a fog and drifted two whole days and nights. There was only thick weather and probably very little swell."

"Well, I don't care," returned Marshall, moodily; "I wouldn't be afraid to risk a voyage in that boat, but I know you are all against me, so there's no use talking any more."

"No, Marshall, we are not all against you," Duncan answered kindly; "but we are doing what seems for the best. It would be a great risk to sail away on this turbulent lake in a small boat in search of the mainland. We have no idea how far it is; and my sense of obligation to the parents of you all is too strong to permit me ever to consent to it. As for the canoe, that is entirely out of the question. It would be tempting Providence to undertake such a journey in it."

When their meager repast was concluded several of the boys went out to get some rabbits and catch some fish for supper, as well as to provide meals for the following day, which was Sunday.



After an early supper, all hands assembled for the weekly session of the congress.

Duncan took the chair, and, the others having deposited themselves on logs and barrels rolled conveniently near, he called the meeting to order. Ransom Storey, the "Clerk of the House," took his place by an inverted cracker box, which was elevated on four stakes driven in the ground, and in his deliberate way read the minutes of the previous session.

After the usual routine of business, Frank Burton arose and announced his intention to introduce "a bill." He proceeded to explain that it was entitled "An Act to Provide for the Building of a Government Railroad." To this Richard seriously objected.

"It won't do to be wasting our time with any such foolishness," he declared. "We have an important question to decide. Our brick and lime, the very things we most need now, are lying on the ground out of our reach half a mile from camp. We must discuss some way to get them here, and I protest against any nonsensical bills being introduced until that question is disposed of. This is no time for fun; at least, we ought to wait till the serious business is attended to."

"Mr. President," replied Frank with great gravity, "I would like to ask the gentleman of the potato barrel what railroads are made for. Does he consider them ornamental merely? Are they not intended to solve the problem of transportation? But I am sorry for my friend. I sympathize with him in his perplexity and distress. It may comfort him to know that I too am unhappy. I am grieving over the question of our foreign relations. Did he ever hear of a government that didn't have any foreign relations? But we have none, and we ought to have some. But how are we to get them? We have plenty of material to make foreign ministers of, it is true. There's Marsh Watt, for instance; he would willingly serve in that capacity—in fact he wants to go. But how shall we send him? Our navy is in a state of innocuous desuetude; and it would hardly be compatible with the dignity of so exalted a personage to be sent on his mission astride of a raft. Besides, he needs a new suit of clothes, and he needs them badly. It would be creditable to this government to have our Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary appear at the court of St. James out at elbows, with no socks on to speak of, with his shoes agape and his hat without a brim. If we had the face to send him to Washington in that plight, he would be arrested as a tramp the instant he appeared at the White House. That's what perplexes me—our foreign relations! But I'm afraid there is nothing to be done until we get our sawmill running; but I would suggest that our foreign ambassador be instructed to turn in while he is waiting and help the Secretary of Agriculture hoe his potatoes! Now let us turn our attention to domestic affairs. Our statesmen are perplexed over the question of transportation, but I have a bill here that will solve the difficulty. It provides in detail

for the immediate building of a railroad—"

"Mr. President," interrupted Richard, "I rise to a point of order. Frank is wasting our time. He knows the idea of a railroad is ridiculous, and I call him to order."

"I think he is just coming to the point, Richard," answered Duncan, smiling, "and as he seems to be nearly through we may as well hear what he has to say."

"You are right, Mr. President," resumed Frank. "I am just coming to the point, and I intend to point a moral for my friend of the potato barrel, who so far forgets his dignity as a member of this august body as to resort, for mere party ends, to such dilatory tactics! Now to resume the thread of my argument. It will be remembered that Mr. Reilly, our member from Derry, brought with him in the schooner two 'little whales.' They are simply car wheels, connected by iron axles about three feet long. We can easily fit a few timbers on them, and then we shall have a stout railway car that will carry a thousand brick or a ton of lime. We have also growing on the eastern shore of Great Bay, not far by water from the falls, a quantity of tall, straight timber, from which Ike can easily saw some rails about twenty feet in length. Those rails can be laid without any ties, being firmly held in place by wooden pins driven in the ground. We can begin our work at this end, floating our rails from the mill and transporting them on the car as fast as the road is built. No locomotive, you see, will be required. That will be a great improvement on other government railroads! All we'll have to do will be to push our empty car up to the kiln, load it with lime and let it run down grade to its destination."

Richard sprang to his feet and cried with great animation:

"Hurrah! It can be done! I beg pardon, Frank; you've hit the nail on the head, but you did waste a quantity of words in getting at it. Now, I'm for carrying out that plan right away. I make a motion that we begin cutting the rails next Monday."

"But according to our rules," said Duncan, "the bill must wait till the next meeting before it can be adopted."

"We can begin the work and adopt the bill afterwards," cried Carl.

"Very well," answered Duncan, smiling, "I have no objection, since the main thing is to get the work done."

After some further discussion Richard's motion prevailed. Carl now arose and signified his desire to introduce a bill.

"It is for the regulation of the use of Fire Arms and Ammunition," he said with an air of great consequence. "In spite of all the cautions that you, Mr. President, have administered, our ammunition is being wasted, and the time will soon come when we shall have none, and we may need it very badly. Now I propose that everyone who has any in his possession be requested to place it in the hands of an officer appointed to be the custodian of such things, and that no person be permitted to use any of the ammu-

nition so placed, except by express permission of the President and his Cabinet."

"I'll agree to that on one condition," cried Henry, "and that is that I have a standing order to shoot the bear and all his crew, wherever they may be found."

"Will you agree to that exception, Carl?" asked Duncan.

"Yes; I'll introduce it as a feature of my bill."

"Aren't you going to have any more rabbits for dinner?" asked Marshall, his lip curling scornfully.

"Plenty," returned Henry. "If you kept yourself posted, Marsh, you would know that the very rabbits the bear carried off to-day were caught in a snare early this morning. I never fired a shot."

"Well," said Marshall, haughtily, "you may pass all the laws you please, but I want you all to understand one thing, and that is that I own my ammunition and I propose to keep it and use it as I think best."

"I do not think anyone will deny your right to do so, Marshall," said Duncan. "Carl's proposition, as I understand it, does not contemplate forcing anyone to surrender his ammunition, but he proposes that we do so by mutual agreement. If you desire to keep yours and use it up, you are at liberty to do so."

"Well, I know what he means by his bill, as he calls it. It's aimed at me, that's perfectly clear."

"No, it isn't," returned Carl, decidedly; "for I knew perfectly well you and Tom would keep on wasting yours, but I propose that the rest of us agree to save our ammunition. We have all been too thoughtless about it, and Duncan has been too lenient. The bill is aimed at him as much as anybody. I propose to make it the duty of our executive officers to see to it hereafter that there is no further waste, and to give them authority to do so."

"All right, pass your bill; but I'm not in it, that's all," returned Marshall.

"Very well," said Duncan; "we will let it go that way, since you are pleased to have it so; but I am sure we all regret that you are not disposed to be one with us in these matters."

"Now," said Marshall, rising and ignoring Duncan's remark, "I want to tell you all what Tom and I propose to do. You passed a law a week ago that anybody disobeying any of your wise regulations should be sent into Coventry—"

"Yes," cried Henry; "and I was ostracized two days for breaking a law that I forgot all about. But it was all right; it was my business to remember."

"I regard you as a fool for submitting to any such nonsensical regulations," continued Marshall, "and Tom and I don't propose to do any such thing. When this new law goes into effect I suppose you'll be trying to ostracize us, but we don't propose to give you a chance to do it."

"I just told you, Marshall," answered Duncan, "that we admit your right to keep your

ammunition; so for that you will be in no danger of incurring any penalties."

"Well," returned Marshall, "there are other laws, as you call them, and we are going to be independent of them all. We are going to save you the trouble of trying to enforce them in our case. We have concluded to withdraw from camp."

"Marshall, you surely do not intend to commit such an act of folly!" said Duncan.

"That's open rebellion," cried Richard.

"Call it what you please, Dick Stockland," retorted Marshall; "I have as much right to any part of this island as any of you have. Tom and I are going to have a camp of our own where we can do as we please, and not be lorded over by any ex-blacksmith that pays his way in college by teaching the young kids."

"See here, Watt, take that back!" cried Henry fiercely, rising and advancing towards Marshall.

"That's an insult," shouted Richard, "and I demand an apology."

"Order! Order!" demanded Duncan. "Be quiet, boys; and Henry, return to your seat! Marshall, you are angry now, and I am sure you do not mean in your heart any disrespect to me; but if you did it would make no difference with my conduct towards you. Your parents placed you under my care, and I cannot allow you to withdraw in this manner."

"Suppose you can't help yourself?" retorted Marshall.

"But you must not leave the camp. Wait until you can think over the matter coolly."

"I have thought it over coolly, and Tom and I have talked it over many a time. We don't intend to submit to your pretended authority any more, Duncan. We are going, and right away, too. If there are any others that want to come with us they're welcome, but if they want to stay and work like clodhoppers for you and Ike, I suppose they have a right to do it. Come on, Tom!"

So saying, Marshall went to the tent, followed by Tom, where they took their blankets and valises, and without saying a word to anyone, passed out of the stockade in the direction of the falls.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH the night following, Duncan lay awake, filled with anxious thoughts and endeavoring to decide what it was best to do. He wondered where the boys had gone, whether they had a comfortable bed and whether it would be wise to follow them and try to discover their retreat.

Then he began to be troubled about their health, greatly fearing lest the exposure of sleeping on the ground through the chilly nights, with no protection from the dew and rain, should bring on some dangerous illness that might prove fatal to them both.

Harassed by such painful thoughts, he tossed uneasily on his bed until nearly morn-

ing, when, finding sleep impossible, he arose and went out of the stockade, followed by Felix, and advancing to the bluff overlooking the bay, stood watching the clouds as they flitted by,

Felix sat by his side, occasionally looking up into his face and wagging his tail, as though to express his sympathy and the constancy of his affection. Suddenly the dog pricked up his ears and seemed to listen intently. Then he uttered a low growl, and bounding forward with the speed of lightning, disappeared in the bushes.



"Well, boys, you see we have found you."

casting their shadows over the shining water. The breeze cooled his fevered brow, and he felt a sense of relief amid the profound and heavenly stillness.

thoughts. Is this the place you have selected to spend the night?"

"We'll stay here for the present," replied Marshall.

Duncan hesitated a moment, but his anxiety for the safety of the dog finally overcame every other consideration, and he ran forward, guided by the rustling of the leaves and the occasional sound of Felix's deep voice. When he came out of the bushes upon the shore of the bay the growls had ceased, and he listened and looked in vain for any sign of the dog's whereabouts.

He stood listening for some time and was about to turn back, when a suppressed murmur of human voices caught his ear, but so faintly that he was uncertain from what direction it came. He moved cautiously forward, believing the dog had found the truants and that they were keeping him quiet for fear of discovery.

This proved to be the case, for he soon found them hidden behind a rock near the water's edge. They had evidently sought this retreat to escape from Felix, but he had ferreted them out.

"Well, boys," Duncan said, looking at them seriously and trying to decide how to address them, "you see we have found you; but I assure you it was purely accidental. Your leaving us in the way you did has deprived me of the power of sleep, and I wandered out here to get rid of my harassing

"Then you have another place in view. But where are your blankets? You are not sleeping here, surely, without any protection from the cold and dew?"

"To tell you the truth," answered Marshall, assuming a haughty air, "since you seem to be so anxious to know what is none of your business, we did not come here to sleep, but—well, it's one of our favorite fishing grounds."

"Did you come here to fish?"

"We had an idea of catching a few—this is the best time."

"But you have no lines."

"How do you know? We have pockets."

"You see, to-morrow is Sunday, Duncan, and we must have our Sunday dinner," said Tom, imitating Marshall's haughty manner.

"It is Sunday morning already," Duncan replied, "and you can hardly claim that you have come here to avoid a desecration of the day; still, as you have had little time to provide yourselves with food since you left the camp, I will say no more about it. I see that my visit is unwelcome, and will annoy you no further; but I cannot leave you without urging you both to reconsider your determination to separate yourselves from the rest of us. I assure you that you are as near and dear to me as the rest of the boys, and I beg you to come back with me to-night."

"There's no use of your talking that way, Duncan, and you ought to know it," returned Marshall, shortly.

"Then I will not urge you, for I want you to come willingly when you do," said Duncan; "but I must warn you of the dangers to which you are exposing yourselves. By sleeping on the ground in the night air you will be in danger of contracting some disease that may prove fatal. This damp atmosphere is full of dangers, especially with no better protection than you seem to have."

"Then you'd better hurry home, Duncan, for your words are lost on us, and you may contract some disease yourself," sneered Marshall.

"I will go," answered Duncan, sorrowfully; "but the time may come when you will be sorry for having treated me in this way; and if it does, or if you are ever in need or trouble, come to me and you will find a friend."

Calling Felix, Duncan returned to camp, and after kneeling down by his bed and praying earnestly for the truant boys, he lay down and fell fast asleep.

When he awoke it was eight o'clock. The boys were gathered around the fire discussing the occurrences of the previous day. As he sprang out of bed, Pat, who was gathering up the breakfast dishes, greeted him with the words:

"Arrah, Mистер Duncan! It's a foina slape ye've had. I told thim to be l'avin' ye alone, for it's a heavy load ye've had on your moind, wid all the thavery and the bad blood and the runaway b'ys. But it's meself has made a discovery that'll refresh your soul. It's a pound parcel o' coffee that rolled aff under the logs the night the bear took the ham. It was missin' "

that same I was, but I thought his honor had swalleied it; but it sames it was not to his taste, and that same is all the better for the loikes of us. Now, the pot is sht'amin' wid a hot cup for ye, Mистер Duncan."

Duncan thanked Pat for his kindness, expressing his pleasure at the very welcome discovery he had made.

While eating his breakfast he called Henry to his side and asked him if he had any idea where the two boys had gone.

"I rather think," said Henry, "they've gone over to the peninsula. There's a little cave there by the shore, where I know Marsh and Tom used to go sometimes. It isn't much, but it would make a snug place to sleep in. I found it one day hunting for the bear, and ever since I told Marsh about it he and Tom have made it a sort of headquarters."

"I thought you would be likely to guess their retreat if anyone could."

Duncan then related his adventure of the night, and added, "I cannot imagine what they were doing so near the camp, unless what they said was true."

"About fishing for their Sunday dinner?"

"Yes."

"Ho! They are not as conscientious as all that."

"No; for it was already Sunday morning; but it was a favorable hour for fishing, and I think they might have been out with that object."

By this time they were surrounded by a number of eager boys, to whom Duncan related his adventure. He then expressed his intention of going to the cave as soon as the service was over. Several tried to dissuade him, among whom was Richard, who said:

"It's too soon, Duncan; let them alone for awhile. They'll only insult you again if you go."

"That's so," said Will; "I believe it will do them good to let them alone for awhile. Let them see that we are taking it coolly and not worrying about them, and it will bring them to their senses quicker than anything else."

"You may be right, boys," said Duncan; "but I cannot quite reconcile myself to that course yet. I feel that I must make this one attempt, and if that fails I will follow your advice."

Accordingly, a little after noon Duncan started, accompanied by Henry. They crossed the bridge at the falls and proceeded southward, following first the stream and then the shore of East Bay until they reached its southern limit, when they struck across the peninsula, reaching the cave after a walk of little more than a mile.

The cave was a little grotto formed by shelving rocks, having a narrow, irregular entrance scarcely large enough to admit a man in a stooping posture. At the side of this opening they found the remains of a fire, where the boys had evidently cooked their breakfast, for the coals were bright and some pieces of wood were still smouldering.

They looked into the cave, and by means of a few rays of light struggling through a crevice in the rock, they could see the boys' blankets and valises; and on a shelving rock that protruded from the extreme end lay a great quantity of fish, cooked and ready for use.

"My!" exclaimed Henry, "they've got fish enough there to last them a week."

"I wonder why they have cooked such a quantity," said Duncan.

"They've nothing else to do; and besides, they are always fishing. The only trouble with them is they want to have their own way. They're not lazy, either one of them."

"I know it, Henry, and they might be such a help if they only would."

"But they won't—they won't submit. Marsh never would. Submission is what I've been preaching to them all along."

"Do you practice what you preach, Henry?" asked Duncan, smiling.

"I? Oh! Well—why, yes, don't I?"

"I asked you."

"I think I do as a general thing. Take this new law about ammunition, for instance. It's harder for me than for anybody else, for if I could I'd be out gunning every day; but I'm not going to fire another shot except to shoot that bear."

"It is hard for you, that is true—I hadn't thought of that. I honor you, Henry, for your willing submission to a regulation that goes so dreadfully against the grain. But where do you suppose Marshall and Thomas are?"

"They are off skylarking somewhere, I guess."

"Let us look about and see if we can find them."

They walked along the shore for nearly an hour in both directions, looking carefully in every place where they thought the boys would be likely to be found, but could discover no signs of them. Finally Henry suggested that they were probably in hiding.

Duncan stopped short, as though struck with a very disagreeable idea.

"Do you think so? I did not think that possible. Well, I will search for them no longer."

He said no more, but started for home, leading the way in grim silence and striding forward over brushheaps and stones, with an energy and rapidity that filled his companion with wonder.

On their arrival in camp, leaving Henry to tell the result of their quest, Duncan went into the tent, where he remained until time for the evening service.

That night he slept soundly, having laid down his burden at the feet of his heavenly Father, consigning the truant boys to the same watchful keeping. He awoke once, aroused by the roaring of a rising storm, but thinking of the snug retreat in which he supposed them to be safely housed, he breathed another prayer for them and fell asleep again.

How long he slept he could not tell, but it seemed to him a very short time, when he was awakened by a tremendous crash that shook the ground like an earthquake. Instantly tor-

rents of water came pouring upon his bed. In a moment all was confusion in the tent. A dozen voices shouted to know what had happened, and Duncan began to call out loudly amid the uproar, asking if anyone was hurt. They all sprang up, and by means of the lightning flashes that constantly illumined the woods, soon discovered what had happened.

A large dead tree standing by the tent, from the branches of which Pat had been in the habit of cutting his kindling wood, had been blown down, breaking the ridgepole of the tent and tearing a great rent in the canvas. Fortunately it had fallen on the table at their feet, carrying along as it fell one upright pole and the broken end of the ridgepole, thus leaving their beds untouched, but causing the tent to collapse.

The boys all huddled together in one corner, the only part left standing, and shivering with cold awaited a cessation of the storm. For a time it seemed to increase in violence. The wind rushed through the trees with terrific velocity, threatening to lift the partly prostrate tent from over their heads. The canvas flapped with a noise like a succession of pistol shots, the large rent constantly increasing in size. Meanwhile the rain poured down with a deafening roar upon the canvas, whose dripping folds were gathered about their ears, while vivid flashes of lightning and terrific peals of thunder followed each other in quick succession.

They stood thus for half an hour, wet and miserable and helpless, almost terrified by the fierce violence of the storm.

Then the gray streaks of returning light began to appear, and the incessant roar of the flood pouring upon the canvas somewhat slackened; but the lightning now seemed to strike nearer, for peals of thunder followed each flash almost instantly.

"It'll soon be over now," said Isaac, leaning forward and looking up at the dark clouds.

"Arrah! Av it isn't it's niver a swalley o' coffee ye'll be gettin' the mornin'," rejoined Pat.

"Why not?" asked Richard.

"Why not, is it! Can coffee be made widout fire, and will fire burn in a river of wather?"

"But things will get dry after a while."

"Dhry! Not av the coals I buried in ashes last noight and kivered up wid logs is quinched wid the flood; and av the coals is out it's not meself knows where we'll be findin' fire, for there's niver a match to be found in the place."

"Whew!" whistled James. "Is that so, Pat? What in the world shall we do? Rabbits and fish are bad enough cooked, but raw—horrors!"

"Marsh and Tom have some matches; anyhow, they had a fire yesterday," said Henry.

"Ah, but it's not borryin' of our neighbors we'll be," replied the Irishman, contemptuously.

Scarcely were these words out of Pat's mouth when there came a blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a tremendous clap of thunder

that seemed to crash into their very midst. For an instant they were deprived of all power of speech or motion. Will was the first to speak.

"Wasn't that a peeler, though! My! I thought we were goners, sure."

"It must have struck somewhere inside of the stockade," said Richard.

"It was the tall tree by the storehouse," cried Walter, peeping out between the folds of the tent; "and the storehouse is on fire—look!"

All rushed out at this startling announcement, regardless of the pouring rain, and found it as Walter had said. The bolt had evidently glanced from the tree and shot in through the open door, igniting some dry leaves and kindling wood, and now the whole building was wrapped in flames.

"Ochone!" cried Pat. "The coffee! The coffee!"

"The barrels and boxes!" exclaimed James. "We'll need them when we come to harvest our crops."

"The stockade!" shouted Carl. "The fire will spread and burn it all up—everything is built of dry timber in that corner."

"Some axes!" cried Isaac—"axes, quick, or the whole place, tent and all, will go."

The rain had now almost entirely ceased, and the flames, gaining headway as this impediment to their progress was removed, leaped high above the boys' heads, threatening not only to spread along the stockade, but also among the brush and leaves that littered the surrounding woods.

Isaac dispatched Pat and two of the boys to the bay for water, and calling Richard, seized an axe and began vigorously cutting down palisades to prevent the spread of the fire. Meanwhile the others worked manfully, stamping out the blaze and whipping it back as it ran along the ground. After a half hour's labor the fire was subdued, a heap of burning embers being all that remained.

Pat had now an abundance of coals with which to start his fire, which he proceeded to do immediately, shaking his head and grumbling about the trials of life in camp, particularly the loss of his can of coffee.

He was lamenting this as though it were the greatest of the calamities they had suffered, when James came running to him, holding the coffee in his hand and exclaiming:

"There! It isn't hurt a bit. I found it outside the storehouse, under a stone."

"Arrah! Under a shtone! Ah, I was forgettin' me own hadefulness. It was meself put it there to kape it out o' the way of thaves. That same'll be a comfort to us all now, wid our troubles and shipwreck and bears, and wid our burnin' out o' house and home—" Here he stopped short, and looking at Isaac, continued in a different tone, "It's the ould wan has got into me the mornin', wid me forgettin' the coffee and the damage at the bay—ah, Captain Ike, it's a sad mornin' to ye for the havoc of the shtorm. The way vessel—"

"The vessel!" exclaimed Isaac in a startled voice. "What's happened to the vessel? Be

quick now, and no tomfoolery! Out with it!" "It's not the schooner I'll be tellin' ye about, but the way bit vessel yez call the looger."

"Oh!" responded Isaac in a tone of relief. "But what about the lugger?"

"The shtorm has carried it aff."

"That couldn't be," returned Isaac. "It was chained to the post and locked with a padlock I took out of the schooner. It would take a twenty horse-power to drag it away."

"The post is there, but the chain and looger are gone."

"How could that be, with the wind blowing inshore all the time?"

"But it is; it's gone intirely, is the boat. Av ye'll not belave me, here's the lock, and all battered up it is wid the shtorm." Here Pat took a broken lock out of his pocket and handed it to Isaac.

"Where'd you find this?" Isaac asked in surprise.

"On the ground by the post, whin I went for the wather. I shteppe on it in the darkness, and put it in me pocket."

Isaac examined the lock very carefully. It had evidently been pounded with a stone and was broken nearly in two.

"That's the lock," he said, "and some human hand did this. Yes, Pat, the canoe has been carried off, I'm afraid, but not by the storm."

All stood silent and breathless for a moment, everyone surmising, but fearing to express his thoughts. Presently Will broke the silence, saying in a hushed voice:

"It must have been Marsh and Tom."

"Yes," returned Frank; "and the boat was what they were after the other night when Duncan found them on the beach."

"They were baffled then, but now they have got it and gone," added Carl.

"Gone!" Duncan fairly shouted. "Gone away in that boat! Boys, it cannot be. Surely, they have not left the island—they would never have started out in such a storm."

"No," replied Isaac; "they would know better than that, but they probably sailed before the storm came up."

"Marsh don't know a thing about weather signs, you know," said Carl.

"They must have left the island, Duncan," said Will, "for they would never have taken so much pains to get the boat for any other purpose."

"Yes," assented Isaac; "and Marshall's speaking about going away in it is one reason why I put on that lock. I didn't know what might happen, you know, though I didn't say anything."

"If those boys have gone away in that boat they are lost!" cried Duncan, sitting down, pale and trembling, and covering his face with his hands.

"Come, Mr. Duncan," said Isaac, "it ain't best to be cast down till the time comes, and till we're certain about it. The canoe may have rode out the storm, after all; but anyhow, she would be drove back towards the island—that is, if they sailed sou'east, and that's the

most likely direction they would take, you see."  
 "Is there a possibility of that?" asked Duncan, springing up.

"Of course there is."

"And if they hadn't gone very far," suggested Carl, "and I don't see how they could in that clumsy lugger, they would be almost sure to strike the island again."

"Then there is no time to be lost," cried Duncan. "We must rescue them if it lies within the power of human effort—and may God be merciful to us all! Isaac, get some ropes and whatever else you think we will need. Frank, you and Henry go down to South Point, and if you see them anywhere in that direction fire a gun—and load it heavily! That will be a signal for us to come to you. If they should be drifting towards the peninsula, fire two guns. That will mean that you are coming to join us. The rest of us will go to the peninsula; for they must have sailed from there, and will be likely to try to get back there again if they have outlived the storm, which I trust in God's mercy they have done."

Thus speaking with great energy and rapidity, Duncan rushed away towards the peninsula, followed by an excited and anxious crowd of boys.

#### CHAPTER XV.

DUNCAN led his party directly to the cave, which was situated on the highest point of the southern shore of the peninsula.

As they came out upon the low bluff and cast their eyes anxiously over the waste of waters, the sun was beginning to show its bright beams above the eastern horizon, shedding an illuminated pathway that danced and glimmered with the rise and fall of the waves.

They could see nothing on the vast expanse in any direction, save the foaming whitecaps that appeared momentarily upon the crests of the watery mountains. They looked in vain for some dark speck in the distance that might tell them the boat was in the vicinity of the island. Disappointment was written upon every face; and when Isaac, after climbing a tree and scanning the horizon with his glass, announced that the canoe was nowhere in sight, the tears came into their eyes and they stood in silent grief, no one wishing to speak what was uppermost in his mind.

The wind was still strong and blowing from the southwest, having shifted from the direction taken by the storm. Isaac said it was still shifting, and all knew that if it kept on it would be likely to drive the canoe away from the island altogether. The prospect of their being able to rescue their comrades, which had thus far buoyed up their spirits, began to appear dismal indeed.

There was but one ground of hope left. Pen Point on their right shut off their view towards the west, and there was a possibility that Henry and Frank might discover the boat in that direction; but as the moments sped by and no

tidings came from them, the conclusion seemed inevitable that they had thus far met with no success.

"They have certainly had time to view that shore," said Duncan sadly.

"Yes," returned Richard; "but do you think we could hear their gun if they fired it?"

"We could hear that old shotgun of Buster's—it makes a tremendous noise when it goes off," answered Will.

"We could hear it," said Duncan, "I am sure. I told them to load it heavily, and the wind is favorable now. No, I am afraid they have not found them."

"Then we had better go to East Point and look in that direction," Carl suggested. "They might have drifted off that way before we got here—this wind would carry them that way."

"No," cried Will; "let's run over to Pen Point. That's nearer, and we can see—"

Will was interrupted by the distant sound of a gun, and finished his sentence with a shout:

"Hurrah! They've found them!"

All echoed the shout, and Duncan exclaimed fervently:

"Thank God, it is true indeed! But keep quiet, boys; there may be another shot, and we must know if there is, for it will have to govern our action."

They stood in anxious suspense for fully five minutes, and were just starting off in response to the supposed summons, when they heard another report, this time louder than before and from a more northerly direction.

"They must have fired as they were running along the shore," said Richard; "and that probably accounts for the long time it took them to load. They must have started to come here."

"That is what the second gun means," Duncan replied; "they are coming, and the boat is drifting in this direction."

"But it can't strike here," said Isaac positively. "By the way the wind is blowing it'll be Pen Point, unless they clear it; and if they do, they're gone, for without a change of the wind they'll be drove away from the island."

"Then all hands to Pen Point!" cried Duncan, starting off on a brisk run, followed by all the others.

"Pen Point," so named by the boys from the fact that it was a part of the peninsula, was a low, rocky cape forming a part of the eastern shore of Shipwreck Channel, where it expanded into what Isaac called "the offing." The water was very shallow for some distance out, and a great number of rocks could be seen lifting their ugly heads above the surface of the water. It was a dangerous shore to approach with a boat of any size, even when a moderate wind was blowing.

The hearts of the boys nearly failed them when they reached it, for they instantly discovered a canoe a short distance away, driven by the wind and heading directly for the rocks.

The change in the wind had thrown the waves into a furious tumult, and the frail craft was tossing helplessly on a choppy sea, now pitch-

ing forward with a furious plunge into the yawning depths and again rolling heavily and shipping water as a wave struck her abeam. It seemed as though she must inevitably capsize, but Carl said there was no danger of that, because she was too full of water. This was indeed painfully evident, for the glass had revealed that Marshall and Thomas were actually sitting in water nearly up to their knees and working for dear life, bailing it out with their caps.

So intent were they upon doing this that they took no heed of anything on shore or in what direction the boat was drifting, their only idea being to keep her afloat. The sail had been taken down, a precaution they had evidently taken as soon as they began to realize their danger.

They were now approaching the shallow water and the vicinity of the rocks, but they were still too far out for the boys on shore to render them any assistance. If they could but pass the outer group of rocks in safety they could be reached, for the water was not more than four feet deep inside the inner ledge, which formed a sort of natural breakwater within a hundred feet of the land.

Every moment brought them nearer to the danger, and it seemed as though there was not the slightest chance of their passing it in safety. Duncan and his companions were compelled to stand idle and helpless, watching in breathless anxiety the steady approach of the unfortunate boys to what seemed like death.

Meanwhile Isaac had made preparations to attempt a rescue at the proper moment. Two long ropes had been provided, one end of each being tied securely around some small trees, while the other ends were fastened about the bodies of Duncan and himself. The boys were instructed to hold the ropes and pull inshore when signalled to do so. Two long poles with hooks attached had also been prepared, to enable them to reach out beyond the first ledge of rocks into the deeper water.

Thus equipped, they all stood awaiting the critical moment in suppressed excitement. The canoe was now almost upon the outer edge of the rocks, and it seemed as if one plunge more would dash her in pieces.

Meanwhile, the wind had been shifting around more towards the west, and now to the surprise of all, just as the little craft appeared about to take the fatal leap, a sudden blast struck her abeam and sent her clear of the threatening rocks. She was now inside the outer group but further towards the point, and the boys were obliged to change their position. Here, however, another danger threatened, for if the wind continued to blow from the west the boat would never touch the point at all, but be driven out into the broad lake.

Isaac scanned the horizon anxiously.

"That blast was the finishing up of the blow, I think," he said; "but if it don't lull pretty quick there ain't no chance for that canoe."

"There's East Point, though," Will suggested.

"Yes, but the wind ain't right to carry 'em there. They'd miss East Point by a quarter of a mile."

As Isaac spoke there was a very perceptible lull, and in a few seconds the wind had almost entirely subsided. The boat now drifted slowly towards them, but it was evident she was beginning to sink.

"Now!" shouted Duncan, springing forward into the water, followed instantly by Isaac.

In a few seconds they were on the rock that formed the breakwater. As the rescuers climbed to their positions Marshall and Thomas were swept into the foaming abyss. Exhausted by their continuous exertions and incapable of further effort, they went down as soon as they struck the water.

Duncan and Isaac waited for them to come to the surface. Thomas was the first to rise, and fortunately he came up within a few feet of Isaac, who quickly drew him out of the water and placed him on the rock.

When Marshall rose Duncan saw that he could not reach him with his pole, and without waiting for assistance he dived into the water and swam out to him. Marshall grasped him with the despairing grip of a drowning man, and, locked in each other's embrace, they went down together.

Isaac saw them sink. Leaving Thomas on the rock, he ran to Duncan's rope, with which he succeeded in drawing them both to the edge of the rock. Here he held them by main strength and called loudly for assistance. Richard and Carl rushed into the water, followed by Frank and Henry, who had shortly before arrived, while the others remained on shore to man the ropes. By the united efforts of all the three were finally brought safely to land.

Duncan quickly recovered, but the two boys lay for some time apparently lifeless. The rest worked over them diligently. At last their efforts were crowned with success. Thomas was the first to show signs of life. Marshall, who had twice gone down in the water, recovered more slowly, but finally he drew a long breath and opened his eyes. Then the joy and gratitude of the rescuers knew no bounds.

A couple of stretchers were made of poles, on which the two were placed, and then all hands started for camp. Isaac took Pat with him, and accompanied by Henry and Frank, hurried forward to put the ruined tent in order and otherwise prepare for the reception of the now helpless invalids.

It was nine o'clock when the procession bearing the rescued boys reached the stockade. Pat had a roaring fire and a steaming pot of coffee ready, besides a bountiful breakfast of boiled rabbits and fried fish. The tent was up, one of Isaac's smaller sails having been used temporarily to cover the rent, and two beds for Marshall and Thomas had been prepared, the blankets and leaves having been carefully dried by the fire. The remainder of the day was spent in drying clothing, repairing the damage done by the fire, and making things comfortable generally.



Five hours the boys had been exposed to the cold morning air in wet clothing, and Duncan feared that the result might be deep colds and perhaps dangerous illness. The event proved that his apprehensions were but too well founded. On the following morning Frank and Henry were found to be suffering from sharp pains, and when Duncan went to them he found them both very feverish and ill. Thomas was able to get out of bed, but he complained of a severe pain in his chest and before night was obliged to give up and take to his bed again. As for Marshall, he passed a very restless night, and in the morning was delirious with a raging fever.

When these discoveries were made Duncan's heart nearly failed him. He had caught a severe cold himself, and felt miserable all through the day, but he refused to give up, battling manfully with his illness and trying to attend to the wants of the four sick boys; but the next day he could not lift his head from the pillow.

The following day Richard was taken down, and a few days afterwards Willie appeared with a flushed face and went to bed.

The situation of the little community was now almost desperate. Seven out of the fifteen were sick in bed, and three of the seven seemed to be dangerously ill.

All who were able to be up devoted themselves to the care of the sick. They were sometimes perplexed to know what to do for them, but they never remitted their exertions. Some of them were always at the bedside of the sufferers day and night, and they strove by good nursing to make up for the want of proper medical treatment.

On the third day after Duncan took to his bed Carl, Will and Sam held a very serious consultation, when the following conversation took place:

"I think Duncan is the worst off of any of them," Sam said gravely.

"I don't know about that," answered Will. "Marsh is delirious a good share of the time, and seems to imagine himself at home. He talks as though his friends were opposing him in something. It's just dreadful to hear him, sometimes."

"Do you think he has pneumonia?" asked Carl.

"I'm sure he has. That shortness of breath is a pretty sure symptom, and when he is rational he complains of a severe pain in his left lung."

"What sort of treatment do they give in pneumonia, Will?" asked Carl again. "You ought to know something about it, for your father is a doctor."

"I never took any pains to find out, but I think I've heard him speak of giving an emetic in some cases."

"I don't see what good that could do. I should think an emetic would make anybody sick instead of curing him."

"It does do good, though," said Sam. "It cleanses the system and so gives Nature a

good chance to throw off the disease, you see."

"Then it must be good for all diseases," replied Carl. "Would it do Buster good, do you think? He has rheumatism."

"I never heard of giving an emetic for rheumatism," said Will; "but we've got to do something, that's certain."

"It is good for pneumonia, for your father said so," declared Sam.

"Oh, I'm not sure it was pneumonia he was talking about. It might have been appendicitis or some such disease."

"What sort of a disease is that?"

"I don't know."

"I thought you were going to be a doctor yourself, Will?"

"Perhaps I shall. You seem to think I ought to know everything because I'm going to study sometime."

"No; but I should think you'd be learning something about it from your father."

"So I am. I've learned to pronounce appendicitis correctly; but I don't know what sort of a disease it is yet—that'll be the next step, you see!"

"It's Latin, and must come from the same root as appendix," remarked Carl; "that will give you a clew to its meaning."

"Then it must be a sort of supplementary disease," returned Will, "like a footnote, or something explanatory tacked on to the end of a volume! I shouldn't wonder if that was what's the matter with Dick. He's just sick enough to be peevish, and yet he has some of Buster's symptoms. I rather guess he is suffering from an appendix to Buster's rheumatism!"

"But really, Will, we must be serious, or this consultation won't amount to anything," said Sam, thoughtfully. "Now, my idea is that the system cannot be right when it is diseased, and if an emetic cleanses the system, then an emetic would be a good thing for all of them."

"But what can we use for an emetic?" asked Carl.

"I know a plant that makes a good emetic," replied Sam. "I've seen some of it growing in the edge of the woods. I should know it if I saw it in Africa, for my grandmother used to keep great bunches of it in our garret."

"What is it?"

"Thoroughwort. You make it into a tea, but it's awful stuff to take. I know, for I used to be dosed with it."

"Do you really suppose it would do Marsh any good?" asked Carl of Will.

"I shouldn't wonder. We might try a little of it and see."

"I am sure it would," said Sam. "It's a sovereign remedy for almost everything; at least my grandmother used to say so. But for an emetic you have to take it in large doses."

"Well, I believe in outward applications," declared Carl. "Those hot blankets and bricks that we've been putting around Buster have done him a heap of good, and I think hot poultices would do Marsh good, too. Would thoroughwort make good poultices, Sam?"

"I never heard of its being used that way, but I should suppose it might."

"I'll tell you what will do splendidly if we can only find some," exclaimed Will; "plantain. I have read that it is often used on inflamed parts with a very healing and soothing effect."

"So have I," answered Carl, "come to think of it. It will be just the thing; but we must keep on with the other applications, too."

"Of course," replied Will; "we won't omit anything, but we can try the plantain and thoroughwort besides."

"Well, Sam," said Carl, "you get the thoroughwort and I'll get the plantain. I know where there is some."

So the consultation ended. The boys were in earnest, and applied themselves to their duties as physicians and nurses with great assiduity. Whether their patients were cured by their treatment or recovered in spite of it, the writer does not presume to say, but certain it is that they all recovered. They were well injured to exposure and hardship, and their previous health was greatly in their favor. But it was a long and anxious period, and heartily glad were the faithful nurses as their patients, one after another, became convalescent and were able to show their white faces at the table.

Marshall was the last to recover. When the fever left him he was exceedingly weak, and from that time his improvement was so slow as to be scarcely perceptible from day to day. Duncan watched over him with the utmost diligence to see that he committed no imprudence, and his care was finally rewarded by his patient being able to be up and walking about the camp.

One day, about a month after the rescue, when the boys had all gone out and the two were left alone, Marshall, who was lying on his bed to rest from a longer walk than usual, called Duncan to his side and expressed a desire to talk with him.

"Duncan," he began, "I have been watching you ever since I began to get well."

"I have seen your eyes following me often, Marshall, and I wanted you to know how we all love you and how anxious we are to have you get well and strong."

"I did know it; at least, I have found it out through my sickness. The boys have all been very kind to me; but you—you couldn't have done more for me if I had been your own brother. Your anxiety about me and your unselfish devotion to my wants have shone right through your eyes, and I would be a brute if I didn't appreciate it." And the tears came into Marshall's eyes.

"I believe you are as dear to me as a brother, Marshall, and so are all of these boys. I could not but feel a brother's interest in you, for you were all—"

"Placed under your care."

"Yes, that is true," replied Duncan, looking at him seriously.

"I know it, and I knew it all the time; and

you have tried to be faithful to your trust. You have always been unselfish, and true, and noble, Duncan, and I have been selfish and mean to you all along."

"You did not really mean to be, Marshall, I am sure. You did not intend—"

"Duncan, I have been disagreeable to you and treated you contemptibly in every way; I opposed you in everything. It wasn't because I had anything against you, or Ike; but I didn't want to stay here. Now I can see how mean and selfish it was and am very sorry indeed for it all, and I want you to forgive me—can you?"

"You were forgiven long ago, Marshall. When we first discovered that you and Thomas had gone, everything else was forgotten. We had no thought—at least, I had none—except to save you from the dreadful peril into which you had fallen; and so throughout your sickness. Now, there is nothing to forgive."

"I am sure I do not deserve all this kindness. But there is another thing I want to speak about. I don't want you to blame Tom. It wasn't his fault that we acted as we did—at least, not chiefly; and as to our going off in the boat, that was all my fault. Tom didn't want to go. After you met us at the beach he begged me to come back to camp, but I was angry and wouldn't do it."

"Were you intending to take the boat that night?"

"Yes; but after we found we were discovered we gave it up till the next night."

"What a mercy that you didn't start out that night! If the storm had overtaken you far away from the island you would certainly have perished."

"I'm afraid we would. It has been an awful lesson to me, Duncan. What we suffered God only knows. I never expected to get to the shore alive, and I can never be grateful enough to you all for saving our lives."

"It was your heavenly Father who saved you, Marshall. He guided the boat and cast you up into our very arms. But it is all over now, and you have an opportunity to show him how sorry you are for having done so wickedly."

"Yes, and I mean to. And I intend to try to make Tom do better, too. He would have done better if it hadn't been for me. I know what is right, but Tom is always led by others; so don't blame him for our going off that way. It was all my fault."

## CHAPTER XVI.

FOR about four weeks little had been done except to attend to the wants of the sick and keep the camp supplied with food.

The mill, the limekiln and the brickyard were entirely deserted. Isaac's water-wheel rolled on in peaceful solitude, and the otters, driven out of the creek by the presence of noisy workmen, had now returned to the falls in great numbers.

Henry had observed their habits from time

to time with the greatest interest, and anticipating that there would be a great stampede of the otters to the bay whenever work should be resumed at the mill, he conceived a plan by which a large number of them might be captured, and a quantity of necessary material for the use of the community secured without the expenditure of ammunition. He had contemplated a *coup d'etat* of this kind for a long time, and as he lay about the camp in enforced idleness, recovering from his sickness, he studied out the details of his plan.

Several years before, he had acquired great skill in knitting hammocks and nets of various kinds, and having noticed in the hold of the schooner one day a quantity of large, heavy cord, he now asked permission to use it for the purpose he had in view. He then whittled out a needle of the proper size and shape, and spent the closing days of his convalescence constructing a large net, into which he wove ribs of small rope which Isaac also loaned him for the purpose. At his request Isaac and Richard made a number of spears by fastening knife-blades to the ends of long poles.

When everything was ready the three went out on the raft and set the net across the mouth of the creek. An hour later a dozen boys approached the falls, and taking positions on either side of the creek, began to shout and whip the water with poles and branches, making the greatest possible din and racket, to frighten the otters out of their hiding places. The terrified animals rushed down the stream in swarms to escape the pursuing enemy, and, running blindly into the net, became hopelessly entangled in its meshes. It was rare sport, and Felix seemed to enjoy it quite as much as any of them. He ran along the bank, bounding to and fro and barking with all his might, as though he perfectly understood the purpose of the transaction.

But the most exciting scene was yet to come. Between forty and fifty of the otters were now imprisoned in the net, while many more were swimming about in the stream just above it, darting hither and thither and diving in the utmost terror and confusion, making frantic efforts to escape the clubs and poles so vigorously aimed at them. So far everything had worked well. The enemy seemed to be wholly in their power, and the boys fully expected an easy victory.

But there were many more animals at liberty in the stream above the net than were caught in its meshes. These now attempted to retreat towards the falls, and the boys who had no spears, flushed with excitement and anxious to secure as many as possible, endeavored to head them off by beating them back; but the otters, now fairly at bay, began to fight desperately. They came out of the water in great numbers, some trying to escape in the woods; but scores of them turned against their assailants with terrible ferocity. The boys defended themselves as well as they could, but soon realized that they were in great danger of being overcome by superior numbers and seriously injured.

Then some of them began to shout lustily for their companions to come with their spears, while others beat a hasty retreat.

Meanwhile Carl found himself confronted by three desperate animals that fought him viciously. He used his club with all his might, but they tore parts of his clothing to shreds and gave him a severe wound on his foot. But for the timely arrival of Frank, who dispatched two of them with his spear and drove the other away, Carl would have had by far the worst of the encounter.

"Whe-ew! Aren't they savage, though!" he exclaimed, as Frank assisted him to a log where he sat down to examine his wound. "My, Frank! I didn't know an otter would fight like that, did you?"

"No; but we've found it out to-day. 'Live and learn,' according to the old adage! They look very meek, but they seem to be fierce enough when they get roused up once."

"Yes. That was a vicious bite that fellow gave me."

"Well, you can't blame him. He did it in self-defence."

"I know it. It seems a pity to slash at them so; but we need their skins. We can't possibly get along without something to make some clothing out of. My clothes were nearly used up before, but now they are a great deal worse. That fellow has about destroyed one of my trousers legs. I look like a regular ragamuffin now, I expect."

"Well, as to that, I can't say that you do look particularly dressed up. But never mind, old fellow, I will lend you a trousers leg! I have an extra one at the camp—I cut off the other to patch the ones I'm wearing—but it's a different color from yours. Won't you cut a figure, though, sporting about with one leg brown and the other pepper-and-salt!"

"I don't believe I shall sport any at all for awhile, for this bite, I am afraid, will lay me up for a long time."

"No, it won't! Take one of Sam's emetics and you'll be all right! Cleanse the system with thoroughwort tea—that's the idea!"

"I'll try Will's remedy—plantain leaves. They're worth all the thoroughwort in America."

"Quite right, my boy! You can have your choice of doctors—this is a free country. But you must get that shoe off, for your foot will begin to swell soon."

"I know it. I wish you would take it off for me, Frank; but you'll have to be careful. I reckon you'll have to cut it. I don't believe I can stand it to let you pull it off."

"Cut that shoe? It doesn't need any cutting, Carl. It's full of holes already. There's such a big gap here between the sole and the upper that I could slip the shoe off over the top of your head without the slightest difficulty. I wonder you don't put it on that way. There! Now it's off, and you'll have peace of mind and foot too. This is something of a bite, that's a fact. Let me just wrap my handkerchief around your foot. It isn't very clean—I mean the handkerchief isn't. I forgot to wash it last

month! There you are! Now, can I do anything more for you? I must be off to see how goes the battle."

"No; go ahead, Frank. I'm all right now, thank you."

Frank started for the creek, but was attracted by Willie's cries, who begged him to come in great haste. He found the little fellow pounding manfully with a stick on the head of an otter, whose sharp teeth were deeply set in Felix's shoulder, the dog meanwhile lying on the ground and feebly trying to keep up the fight. Around him lay five dead otters, which Willie said he had slain in a terrific encounter.

One stroke of Frank's spear was sufficient to release Felix, and then he let his head drop on the ground and lay bleeding and panting, as though completely exhausted.

"I saw him pitch into them," said Willie, "and I tell you, he made quick work of them for a while; but there were too many for him, and when that fellow got his teeth into his shoulder he couldn't do anything. I tried to beat him off, but the harder I pounded the more he hung on. Do you think he'll get over it?"

"No; the otter won't, that's certain."

"Ho! You know I mean Felix. He's badly hurt. That wound is deep, Frank. Poor fellow!"

Willie stooped down and patted the dog, speaking soothing and affectionate words to him. Felix slightly wagged his tail in acknowledgment of the kindness, but continued to pant and lie perfectly still. The boys dressed his wound as well as they could, and then Frank went to see what was going on in other parts of the field.

But the battle was over. The otters had all been slain or made good their escape.

The boys now assembled on the west side of the creek to rest, with the exception of the wounded, who, under the escort of Sam and Willie, had hobbled off on their way to the camp.

"You are the hero of the day, Buster," laughingly cried Will, when all were seated or reclining against the trees. "We owe our great victory to your generalship. We'll have to make you generalissimo—nothing but the superlative degree will do. Just think! We have suffered only two casualties, while the enemy has fled, leaving upwards of eighty dead on the field!"

"Oh, I was certain my plan would work," said Henry with an air of great consequence, "though I confess I rather expected to make a bigger haul."

"A bigger haul!" repeated Walter in surprise. "I should think eighty of these great fellows was a big haul enough. I don't see what we are going to do with so many."

"We'll find use enough for their skins," replied Henry.

"What will we do with their carcasses?"

"Soup!" cried Will.

"Perfectly wholesome food, only a little rank," remarked Ransom.

"That's just the trouble," said James: "and it's a great pity, too, for we are getting awfully

tired of fish and rabbits. But there's one comfort; we'll have some vegetables now in a few days."

"Is that so, Jim? Good!" cried Henry. "Then I'll show you how to make a dish that'll make your mouth water. Just cook up a lot of vegetables of all sorts, you know, with some choice bits of rabbit, and you'll have a pot-pie as good as you want!—though it won't have any dumplings, or crust."

"Oh, Buster, don't—don't, I beg of you!" exclaimed Frank with a look of comical concern.

"Don't! Why, don't you like pot-pie?" asked Henry in surprise.

"But, my dear fellow, reflect!" replied Frank. "Here we are, just about to place you on a pinnacle of grandeur as our great military hero, and you must needs besmirch the luster of your own greatness and dissipate the halo of glory that we desire to entwine about your noble brow, by coming down to the level of kettles and stew-pans and betraying a taste for pot-pie! Alas! Is this the stuff our heroes are made of?"

"Mortals, all of them," drawled Ransom; "so we find the heroes of Greece and Rome to have been. No doubt they revelled in stews, but the poets haven't celebrated their achievements in that line."

"Oh!" said Henry, as Frank's meaning began to dawn upon him, "I thought Frank didn't like it, and I was going to say he didn't know what's good, that's all. But I should think that if those old heroes liked pot-pie the poets would have mentioned it; but Rans says they haven't, and I suppose he knows. For my part, I never could make out what those old writers like Homer and Virgil were driving at, anyway. It might have been pot-pie or anything else, for all the sense I could ever make out of them."

Henry himself joined good-naturedly in the merriment that followed this astute remark.

"I am afraid you will never be able to pose as our hero, Buster, and we'll have to give you up," laughed Richard.

"Never!" cried Will. "Must a hero know Latin and Greek? Not a bit of it! Frank shall celebrate the victory of Otter Creek in a poem for the benefit of future ages, and then our Buster will shine with undiminished luster, for no one will know of his weakness for stews!"

"I admit that the theme is an inviting one," said Frank, stopping a moment to reflect; "but I must plead the pressure of public duties as my excuse for declining so pleasant a task. I will suggest, however, that as Rome used to honor her victorious warriors with triumphal arches, we do the same in honor of our great military genius. We will place a sentinel on the palisades, erecting a cracker box for a signal tower, and command him to watch for our hero's coming. We will entwine a wreath of thoroughwort over the gateway, which shall be our triumphal arch; and when the manly form of the conqueror appears in the distance, our sentinel shall 'sound the martial blast' and summon all to attend, in words like these:—

"Lo, here comes the redoubtable Buster, Always 'resolved to conquer or to die.' Drop your cares and be ready to muster! He comes to be regaled with rabbit pie."

"All right," said Henry. "I like that last line. You give me the rabbit pie, and you may do as you please about the rest."

"Well, but all this fun isn't settling the question about these otters," said Richard. "We must skin them first and bury their carcasses, of course; but their hides are not going to be good for anything without being tanned, and who knows anything about tanning them?"

"Of course," returned Will, "we must do something to put them in shape for use. We can't make moccasins very well, and certainly not blankets or clothing out of them, unless they are softened up somehow after they get dry."

"Untanned hides for blankets, to say nothing of dress-suits and underwear—*whew!* Give me the soft side of a board!" remarked Frank.

"Well," said Richard, "I for one would never have engaged in this business if I hadn't thought Buster knew what he was going to do with the hides, to get them in some decent shape to use after it was all over; but he doesn't seem to."

"How do you make that out, Dick?" asked Henry. "You seem to think, because I choose to keep still while you all show your ignorance, that I don't know what I'm about. But you'll see that I am not quite so inconsiderate as you imagine. Do you suppose I would plan to kill these otters and not have any idea as to whether we could dress their skins or not, afterwards?"

"I shouldn't suppose you would, but you haven't intimated how we can do it yet."

"No, because there is plenty of time for that. You'll see that I took everything into consideration. I confess I had no knowledge of tanning hides myself, but I knew Rans had read up about 'most everything, so I asked him about it, and he told me just how to do it."

"Ah, Dr. Dryasdust!" exclaimed Frank. "He is our man! Why didn't we think of him before? Your pardon, Doctor! It was an unintentional omission, I assure you. Will you reveal to us the mysteries of tanning pelts? Only give us the key to unlock some of the secrets of the art, and we will be your slaves forever!"

"An unmannerly slave that will thrust himself into secrets," quoted Ransom, smiling languidly; but he raised himself slowly to a sitting posture and continued: "Tanning is a rather slow and tedious process at best, but more so if you desire to reduce your pelts to a fine condition, suitable for a variety of purposes; and this seems to be the object in the present instance. The ancient mode was more tedious than the modern. The earliest historical records—"

"Oh, bother the historical records!" exclaimed Henry impatiently. "Leave that out, Rans. All they want to know is just how—tell them that."

"Tell us yourself, Buster," said Walter.

"I would if I could. Rans told me all about it, but he said so much about saline substances and gnawing, or something like that, that I got it all mixed up."

"It must be a complicated process," remarked Richard.

"Very simple," replied Ransom. "The complication is all in Henry's head. Put your pelts in a vat and let them soak about three months in oak bark and water."

"Three months!" cried Will. "Why, Rans, you know that's out of the question. We shall be getting ready to go home in three months."

"Well," said Ransom, "that is the tanning process briefly stated."

"But you told me of another way that is quicker," said Henry.

"Yes," answered Ransom; "there are more modern methods, involving the use of certain chemicals, which greatly hasten the process; but strictly speaking, they are not tanning processes. They are known by a different name. You asked me how to *taw* leather."

"What do we care about the name?" asked Richard.

"What's in a name," say you?" responded Ransom, smiling. "A great deal, as you will see. The process called tanning is treatment with tannic acid. The acid is contained in the bark, of which a number of different kinds may be used, and it is extracted by the slow process of soaking in water. The *tawing* method, on the other hand, consists of a variety of processes involving the use of saline substances, together with stretching, rolling or rubbing, by machinery or otherwise. To '*taw*' means to dress or prepare, and technically it means to subject the pelts to a treatment by means of certain chemicals. Alum and other minerals are used, as well as salt. There are various tawing processes, one involving an additional treatment with oil, which render the leather very soft and pliable, and, I should suppose, well adapted to our uses. Tawing is by far the quicker method."

"Well, Buster, I guess you've put your foot in it this time," said Will, with a sigh.

"Why?"

"Because we can't *taw* the hides in the old style for the want of time, and we can't *taw* them, it seems, in the new style for the want of a drug store."

"That's about the size of it, Will," returned Frank, "unless our learned friend here is amusing himself a little at our expense. Aha! I can detect a sly twinkle in his eye. Perhaps a question or two will help to elucidate this perplexing subject. Did I understand you to say, Dr. Dryasdust, that salt and oil are used in this process you call '*tawing*'?"

"Certainly; common salt and oil."

"Could we get along without the other chemicals?"

"I think so, after the lime treatment. The pelts should be soaked in limewater, and if you desire to remove the fur they should be subjected to a treatment with cream of lime, which I will describe—"

"Never mind that now, Doctor. These young men are growing impatient. Now about the oil—what is it made of?"

"Fish."

"What kind of fish?"

"Cod, including some other varieties that belong to the family of Gadidae."

"Cod-liver oil?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that's beyond our reach. Would a substitute do?"

"Probably. In the cod and its kindred the oil is found in the liver—hence the name—but in other kinds it is diffused through the whole body. I should say an oil might be extracted from some of the fish that inhabit these shores that would answer our purpose very well."

"Now we're getting at something definite. It's lucky Sam didn't know that, or he would have been dosing us all with fish oil along with his thoroughwort tea! But, Doctor, doesn't your wisdom suggest some other substitute—something more easily procured? Can we get nothing out of these fat otters that will do?"

"Possibly. I told Henry I thought perhaps we could make the otters assist in tawing their own hides."

"That's a fact, you did," cried Henry; "but I couldn't remember the word you used. I couldn't think of anything but 'gnaw,' and I wondered how in the world you expected to make the otters gnaw their hides!"

"Now then," resumed Frank, "I think the way is clear before us. We have abundance of lime, salt and material to use for fish oil. But one question more, my learned friend! Will you consent to take charge of this business—experiment in oils, you know—and see that the pelts are put in shape for use?"

"Willingly, after they are taken off the otters. Can't agree to skin them all myself."

"Quite right! You are at liberty, of course, to call to your assistance as many of us as you may require. Now, fellows, all hands attention! Unsheath your knives! Prepare to divest the enemy of his dermal appendages! The Island Republic expects every man to do his duty!"

Suited the action to the word, Frank sprang up and went to work with a will, followed by the others, and in the course of a few hours they had accomplished their task.

## CHAPTER XVII.

MARSHALL kept his good resolution and went willingly to work. For awhile he continued most of the time with Duncan, but finding himself cordially welcomed among the boys, he soon began to mingle with them freely, taking part in all their labors and sports as though nothing had happened. Thomas had done this from the first, showing that he had no sensitive feelings in the matter whatever.

Isaac soon had his saw running, and, from the slabs cut from the first logs he sawed, Rich-

ard built a substantial shed to protect it from the rain. So in fair weather and foul, day after day from morning until nightfall, the old familiar sound of a sawmill was heard, reminding the boys of home and stimulating them to greater exertions. On the east side of the creek a number of busy choppers supplied it with abundance of material.

The first trees felled were selected with a view to building the proposed railway. After being sawed into rails, they were floated around the shore to the landing in Little Bay, where the work of laying them began.

Very little shovelling to prepare the roadbed had to be done. The rails were laid flat on the ground, care being taken to place their ends on a solid foundation; they were then firmly fastened to the ground by large, heavy pins, those on the inside being driven below the top surface to allow the guide-flanges of the wheels to pass over them. The boys tested their road as they proceeded, transporting the rails over it from the "home terminus" to the point in process of building, so that when the work was completed their little car had already made many trips over nearly the whole distance.

The car itself had been very easily constructed by fitting the axles to two heavy timbers, upon which was placed a rough box made of heavy plank, which extended over the wheels on either side as in the ordinary railway car.

A brake was also made to regulate the speed down the grade, which extended the whole length of the road. For this purpose a stout post was inserted at one end, extending above and below the box, to which one end of a rope was attached underneath, the other end being fastened to the brake. The post was turned so as to apply the brake to the wheels by means of levers fitted into its upper end like the spokes of a wagon wheel.

Duncan next built his forge, which he placed under the terrace by the falls, where a large rock was so situated as to aid him in the construction of his chimney. He also put up a small building to cover it, and having erected his anvil and burnt some charcoal, announced that he was ready for business.

It was found, however, that another building was necessary, for Isaac's lumber could not be quickly seasoned out of doors, and he required a place under shelter for his workbench and tools. A large building was therefore erected of logs, having a wide fireplace and chimney, for a "dry-house" and shop. This was also placed near the terrace, adjoining Duncan's forge.

So briskly had these works been carried forward that they were all completed by the fourth of September. The "finishing touches" had been put on the building that morning. The boys were taking their noonday meal, Pat having brought it down from the camp. They were sitting about the door of the dry-house discussing what was next to be done.

"I think a house to live in should be the next thing," said Sam.

"And it's a kitchen ye'll be havin' to cook

in, too," added Pat, "av it's the roight thing yez propose to do. Indade, av it wasn't for lettin' ye shtarve, as would be the case wid none of ye knowin' how to cook a dacent male, it's resign I would, wid the shmall accommodations yez furnish for good cookery. How can grane corn and swate pays, and b'iled cabbage to say nothin' of fried fish and rabbit, be cooked dainty and dacent wid the wather comin' down like a flood and doost and cinders flyin' along o' the wind—will ye tell me that?"

"You're right, Pat," answered Will; "that kitchen of yours is a disgrace to civilization."

"I say," cried Henry, "let's all turn in and help Pat build a good kitchen and storehouse."

"Exactly!" returned Frank. "Buster will keep off the bears while we do the work."

"No, I'll pitch in and help too," replied Henry; "only I shall have to go two or three times a day to look after my bear trap. I am determined Mr. Bruin shall not baffle me much longer."

"By the way, Bruin seems to have been keeping himself very quiet lately," said Richard; "we haven't seen any traces of him for six weeks."

"Good reason for that," returned Henry; "he knows I'm after him. He's the slyest bear I ever encountered."

"You talk as if you were in the habit of encountering bears right along, every few days," laughed Will.

"Never mind, Buster, you'll have him yet," said Richard. "For my part, I believe in your ability to bring us some bear's meat: and when we get it, we shall want a nice clean place to have it cooked. So to return to the subject of the kitchen, I say let's go to work and build a good one. We shall be here till the first of November, anyhow, and I think it's time for us to have things respectable."

"And don't you think that before that time it will be too cold to sleep in a tent?" asked Sam.

"It's too cold now, some nights," remarked Willie.

"Now that we've got the saw to running," said Isaac, "we might as well, while we're about it, build a house to live in, with kitchen and storeroom all together."

"It's a good plan, is that same, Captain Ike," cried Pat. "To have a roof over one's head once more would be a comfort indade. And it's here ye'll be building it, av the senses have not departed from the brain of yez all intirely. What for would we be thrampin' back and forth whin the shipyard and the mill and the blackshmit' shop is all down here, and pure wather besides, and it's not bringin' it up from the bay wid a breakin' back we'll be?"

"What do you think about moving the camp, Duncan?" asked Richard.

"I think very favorably of it and have been thinking about it for some time. I thought it best to get the other buildings completed first, and then I intended to suggest that we build a house here. It will be very inconvenient for us to live at the stockade now, as the base

of our operations is to be located at this point."

"Let's have a floor in it," said Sam.

"I was thinking of paving it with brick," replied Duncan.

"Why, will there be enough for that?" asked Richard.

"I think so. You know we saved a great many by using broken stone for filling in; and to-day I made a discovery that will enable us to save a great many more. There is a ledge of loose, flat rock just above the terrace—the only one I have seen on the island—where we can get any quantity of flat stones to build the fireplace and chimney with."

"A paved apartment! And fur rugs in front of our beds! What a luxury!" cried Will.

"What will we do for wind' wa's?" asked Walter.

"Isaac has offered us the use of his cabin windows," answered Duncan.

"Hurrah! How many windows are there?"

"Six small ones and the skylight," replied Isaac; "but I shall want the skylight for my shop."

"Oh, we'll be generous with you, Ike, and let you have the use of the skylight! Six windows twelve inches square will light us up very comfortably," said Sam.

"My eye! Won't we be in town!" exclaimed Willie.

"It's to be a residence in town, now, until we go abroad," said Frank. "And a tony one! But alas for our furniture! Poles for mattresses, and crocheted stakes for bed posts and table legs! And poles are such hard things to sleep on!"

"Arrah!" cried Pat impatiently, "is it idle ye'll be, wastin' your toime wid poles and nonsense, wid the dinner all gone, and the house to be built? It's worruk we'll be after doing the day, and not tomfoolery wid your glib tongues."

"Right, Pat!" returned Frank, springing up; "only don't bring your pots and kettles down here till we get a place to put them. Now, Duncan, what's on the docket for this afternoon?"

"Nothing but the house, that I am aware of. So if you and Carl will bring us a load of lime, so that we can get it slaked and ready for use to-morrow, we will commence without delay. While you are gone, the rest of us will select a site and begin getting out our stone. Marshall and William can meet you at the landing with the raft."

"Shall we build of logs or slabs?" asked Richard.

"Logs, I think; we want it warm, you know."

"But Ike said we could build now because we have the saw running, and I thought perhaps he meant we should use sawed material."

"I did think of that," answered Isaac, "but not for the building itself. I was thinking it would be a good plan to line it with slabs and fill up the space with sawdust. That would make it warmer, and there's plenty of sawdust."

"What's the good of sawdust?" asked Tom.

"We're only going to stay here till November."  
 "It seems to me that would be unnecessary, too," said Richard.

"Still," replied Duncan, "it will be wise, I think, to make the house as comfortable as we can. We are not sure of getting away from here in November, you know."

So saying, he went to work immediately, measuring off the ground and giving directions for the preparation of the necessary materials.

Carl and Frank started for the landing, walking around the shore of the bay. They went on in silence for some distance, Carl whipping the bushes absently and Frank nervously breaking off twigs from the branches of trees that came within his reach. Presently Frank said:

"Slocum, you seem to be in a brown study."

"That's what I was about to say to you, Burton."

"Ha! Great minds run in the same channel! Well, did you notice which way the wind seemed to be blowing with Duncan and Ike just now?"

"About the sawdust, do you mean?"

"Yes. They talked as though there was mighty little prospect of our getting away from here at all this fall, it seemed to me."

"It struck me that way, too. I don't see what they want to stuff the walls with sawdust for, unless they expect us to spend the winter here."

"Nor I. And it's a rather sudden change in Duncan, too. At least, I never heard him say anything of the sort before."

"No; he has always talked the other way; but then, Duncan doesn't tell everything he thinks, you know."

"No, but he always means what he says. If he talked the other way he meant it."

"Oh, of course. Then I suppose he has changed his mind."

"And quite recently."

"Yes."

They relapsed into silence, and in a short time reached the landing. They loosened the brake of the car and began to trundle it over the track in the direction of the limekiln. They proceeded nearly the whole distance before either of them broke the silence. At last Frank exclaimed:

"A penny for your thoughts, old fellow!"

"I was trying to calculate the length of time it will probably take Ike to finish his schooner."

"Well, what's the verdict?"

"Only this: that it will take him a good deal longer than any of us have been expecting. To tell the truth, I have always had a sort of vague idea that it was going to be a bigger job than some of the boys seemed to think, but I supposed of course he was going to get through this fall. I'm certain he can't do it, though, now. I haven't heard Ike say anything about it for a long time, but of course he knows all about it, and he has probably told Duncan, and perhaps they think it wiser to say nothing at present. But just think what he has to do! He has to build his stocks in the first place, and that's no small job, and then he has to get the framework

of his vessel all up from Shipwreck Island, make five new ribs—a big job that, for he'll have to do it all himself—and then the whole must be put in the stocks before he can drive a nail. And that isn't all, either. His lumber isn't all sawed yet, and then it must be seasoned and all dressed by hand. It's a good six-months work, Frank; and we can do very little to help him."

"It does look like a bigger job than we supposed, that's a fact; but there are a good many things that we can do to help him. I can wield a plane myself, and Dick is a regular old war-horse with a chisel and mallet. I've seen him frame a woodshed—you know I spent a month at his house last summer—and I tell you he handles his tools like a veteran."

"Yes; but I've seen vessels built, and there's a great deal more to do on them than one would imagine. Of course Ike can leave some parts of his unfinished, such as the cabin and some other internal fittings, and he has the advantage of having the old framework, mainmast, rudder and rigging all ready; but it will be no small job to build her hull and deck and make them water-tight for the homeward voyage."

"I guess you're right. So there's no doubt but that we are in for a winter outing."

"I am afraid we are. I hadn't thought particularly about it before."

"And Ike has probably expected this for some time."

"He must have done so."

"The probability is that he has been gradually coming to the conclusion and then thought best to consult Duncan about it, which he evidently did very recently. And Duncan, with his usual discretion, suggested that it wouldn't be wise to startle the rest of us with the disagreeable news too suddenly. But that sawdust business just gave them away."

"Do you suppose any of the other boys took the hint, Frank?"

"I don't believe they did, unless it was Rans or Marsh."

"Or Dick."

"Dick wouldn't. He's the most unsuspecting creature alive, Carl, Dick is."

"Then we had better keep still about it."

"Yes, and await future developments."

"But a winter on this island! Think of it, Frank! It will be terrible. The weather must be tremendous in this climate."

"I think we can be as snug as a bug in a good log house. There's any quantity of wood, and we have plenty of otter skins for clothing. If we can only get enough to eat we'll be all right."

"We can fish through the ice; and Jim was telling me last night that he has a large crop of corn and it's going to mature, he thinks. Then he has about two hundred cabbages and a big crop of peas, and he thinks there will be forty or fifty bushels of potatoes. Our poultry has multiplied, too, you know. But Jim is worried about what we are going to do with the things. He says he has worked too hard to have them all go to waste."



"I'm glad you spoke of that, Carl. It's a very important matter, for if the fellows think we're going home this fall they'll let everything go to waste. You and I will have to see to it that the vegetables are all well housed, for if they are not they'll spoil on our hands before the winter is half over. Well, here we are, and now we must load up."

They put on as heavy a load as the car would hold, and giving it a vigorous push to get it well started on the down grade, jumped on and took

it with all his might. The rope, already worn by use, snapped so suddenly that he lost his balance, and had not Frank grasped him by the arm he would have been thrown headlong to the ground.

The car was now beyond control. Gathering new speed with every turn of the wheels, it sped on, bouncing and jolting over the wooden rails in a way that threatened every instant to throw it off the track and dash them against the rocks that lined the roadway.

In a few moments they passed the brickyard and began to descend the steepest part of the grade, after which they would come to the curve, and a short stretch further would carry them to the bay. The boys fully expected the car would jump the track at the bend, where the trees were few and scattering, however, and there were no rocks, so that their chance of escaping injury would be greater than at any other point.

All this passed quickly through Frank's mind, after they had recovered from the first shock and were able to consider their situation more calmly. Carl was greatly excited, but he resolved to face the danger bravely.

"Frank," he said, turning a flushed face to his companion, "if I was on board a vessel I wouldn't mind, but to be dashed to pieces against a rock or tree seems to me just awful."

"Perhaps we won't—don't be glum. There's a better chance at the curve—we'll be there in a minute."

"I know it—and she'll jump the track sure as fate. There's no help for it—we must jump!"

"No, no, Carl! Don't you do it—it would be sure death!"

"I won't unless you do—I wouldn't desert a friend in this fix."

"Bravely said! Here we are—now a second will tell—"

The boys clung to the levers and held their breath as the car struck the curve. A heavy lurch nearly threw them off, but the load of lime served them a good turn, for while it increased the speed with which they ran, it held the car to the track. The heavily loaded vehicle rounded the curve safely and sped on towards the bay.



Frank went in sprawling on all fours, face downwards; but Carl turned completely around in the air.

their places. Carl stood by the brake and Frank sat down by his side.

Both were full of serious thoughts, and they rode a considerable distance without noticing the increasing rapidity with which they were descending the grade, but a sudden jolt, heavier than usual, aroused Frank from his reverie, and he saw that they were running too fast for safety. He called to Carl to put on the brake, and Carl, startled by the shout warning him of the danger, grasped one of the levers and pulled

"Now," said Frank, "we'll have a chance to jump in a minute, but we must do it just in the nick of time. Be ready, Carl, and when we get within a few feet of the water, spring for your life! Jump so as to land in the sand and let the car go!"

They attempted to carry out this suggestion, but miscalculated, and instead of landing on the sandy beach, they were carried out into the water. Frank went in sprawling on all fours, face downwards; but Carl turned completely around in the air and sat down in the water with his face to the shore. Both sank to the bottom, but in a moment rose, spluttering and breathless, and began to swim ashore.

Fortunately William and Marshall, who had come to meet them with the raft, saw them coming and sprang ashore in time to save themselves from being struck. The forward end of the car hit the raft with great force and drove it away from the shore, while the car turned over, spilling its load of lime, and remained on its side partly submerged.

As Frank and Carl struggled up the bank, dripping but otherwise uninjured, the great quantity of lime began to slake in the water, boiling and spluttering and sending up clouds of smoke like a diminutive volcano.

As soon as Will saw that the boys were uninjured he burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, falling down on the ground and shouting and rolling about until nearly exhausted. Marshall, too, had to laugh to keep him company, but he quickly controlled himself and asked:

"What was the trouble? Couldn't you make the brake work?"

"The old rope broke," replied Carl, looking very serious; "but I should judge by the way Staples is going on that he was rather glad of it."

"Oh, he isn't in it," returned Frank, wringing the water out of his coat. "If he was, he'd be as glum as an owl. But I'm willing he should enjoy himself, and I'll be ready to join him in a minute; but wet clothes are not particularly conducive to merriment, especially when it happens to be the only suit a fellow has."

Will now approached them, and sitting down on a stump began to laugh again.

"I'm glad you're all right, fellows," he said between his bursts of laughter, "but it was just killing to see the way you did it."

"If you had gone through what we have, Staples," said Carl, "you wouldn't feel so jolly over it, I can tell you. How would you like to ride down grade like a streak of lightning, with the brake broken and expecting every minute to have your brains knocked out?"

"I don't say I should like it," returned Will; "but your brains are perfectly safe, and you might be good-natured about it, I think, and pardon a little amusement at your expense. But never mind,—I won't laugh any more, except in my sleeve."

"Well, what's to be done now, boys?" asked Marshall. "Our lime is slaking ahead of time,

and it wouldn't be good for anything now, even if we could carry it to the falls."

"It is sizzling a little prematurely, that's a fact," answered Frank. "But it can't be helped, and there's no use being glum over spilled lime, any more than over spilled milk. What's to be done? Why, it seems perfectly plain to me. We must set to work and repair the damage. We must get that runaway car out of the water and bring down another load of lime."

"But the rope, Frank," said Carl.

"There's another one up there—I saw it."

So saying, he waded into the water and began tugging at the car. The others quickly followed, and in a short time they had put it on the track and all four were trundling it up the grade to the kiln.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

FRANK'S and Carl's conjectures as to the meaning of the sawdust proved to be correct. As time went on it became more and more evident to them that Duncan and Isaac were preparing to spend the winter on the island. The work on the vessel was pushed as rapidly as possible, but at the same time every care was taken in building the house to make it fit in all respects for a winter habitation. It was constructed in the most substantial manner of logs carefully hewn and fitted together, the cracks being filled with mortar, and an inner wall was made of slabs as Isaac had proposed, and the space between packed with sawdust. The windows were fitted with heavy, outside shutters hung on iron hinges made by Duncan in his shop. A large fireplace, capable of receiving a backlog four feet in length, was built at one end of the single room, which was to serve as parlor and sleeping-room combined.

Pat proposed to use the fire in the dry-house for cooking, and it was then decided to place the dining table there also, sufficient space in front of the fireplace being reserved for that purpose. The house was placed twenty-five feet away from the dry-house, and the space between the two buildings was closed up on the back side and roofed over for a woodshed. A corn crib was also built in one corner of the shed, and back of Duncan's shop, where there was an open space under the terrace, a house and yard for the poultry were made.

All this excited no little comment among the boys, and some surmised the truth, as Carl and Frank had done. Still, nothing was openly said. Duncan and Isaac kept silence, and the others seemed to be too much interested in other things, or respected their silence too much, to broach the subject.

Then the crops began to ripen, and great quantities of potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables were brought to the falls, floated down the creek on a raft made of slabs, and piled up before the door. What to do with them was a question that raised an animated discussion.

Some advocated placing them in one corner of the dry-house; others wanted to leave them where they were. Frank and Carl stoutly maintained that a cellar must be dug in the hillside back of the house.

"They will all spoil if we don't build one, inside of a month," Frank said.

"Suppose they do—what of it?" cried Richard. "We can't use them all, and if I had my way they would stay where they are. We don't propose to take a shipload of potatoes and cabbages home with us, I hope."

"Don't you suppose we will eat them up before we go?" asked Carl.

"How can we? We'll be sailing away from here in a few weeks."

"How many weeks, do you suppose?"

"Six or eight."

"That will bring us to December."

"Well, navigation won't be closed as early as that."

"Perhaps not, but the bay might be frozen. Now see here, Dick, eight weeks is too short a time to get that vessel ready to sail."

"What makes you think so?" Richard asked.

"I know it," answered Carl. "I'll leave it to Ike."

"I guess Slocum ain't far from right about it," Isaac said.

"And if you add three or four weeks to that," resumed Carl, "it will bring us to Christmas, and this bay will be solid as a rock by that time."

"Well," said Richard, doubtfully, "I hadn't thought of that. But you don't mean to say we've got to spend the winter here!"

"You can draw your own conclusion, Dick," said Frank. "We find certain facts or conditions confronting us, and there's nothing else to be done, it seems to me, but to face them."

It was Tuesday evening, the first of October. Supper was over and all were seated around the fire in the dry-house, excepting Henry, who had just come in and was preparing to partake of some cold cabbage and potatoes that Pat had placed on the table for him.

During the two weeks since their removal from the camp they had been living in the dry-house, sleeping on Isaac's piles of lumber, because the beds in the house were not completed.

The boys all looked at Duncan, expecting him to speak. Finally he said:

"I have been hoping you would all see for yourselves, without my telling you, what Isaac and I have been convinced of for some time; but as some of you seem still to cling to the hope of our being able to complete the vessel this fall—"

"Of course!" cried Tom. "That's the hope that has been held out to us all the time. You don't mean to say that Ike is going back on us now?"

"No; Isaac has done and is doing all in his power to get ready to sail as soon as possible. But we have been convinced for some time that it would be impossible to finish the

schooner this fall. I would have spoken about it before, but I knew it would be a disagreeable shock to you and thought it best to let you find it out for yourselves. I thought if you did so you would feel the disappointment less than if I told you; but as some of you seem to be unprepared for the news even now, perhaps I have made a mistake."

"No, Duncan; you did it for the best," said Frank; "and some of us haven't been as blind as you think. Carl and I got our eyes open three weeks ago. The sawdust did the business for us; but some of these fellows must have had their eyes full of it, or they would have seen what it meant from the start."

"No surprise to me," drawled Ransom; "thought we might make this delectable isle our winter abode, long ago."

"To tell the truth," said Will, "I'm not surprised, either. I've been wondering how Ike was going to get all his lumber dressed and build his vessel before we had a freeze-up, for some nights it's cold enough to freeze, almost, now. I spoke to Marsh about it one day, but he said he guessed it would be all right, and so I didn't think much more about it, one way or the other."

"Marsh seems to think everything is all right now," Tom whispered aside to Will; "he's getting awfully pious lately, and he seems to think Duncan made about half of this world."

"Then I think it's a pity you don't stick as close to him as you used to," Will answered curtly, and Tom relapsed into silence.

"Well," cried Henry from the table, "you fellows all seem to have expected we were going to spend the winter on this island, but I confess I did not. I'm not disappointed, though; to tell the truth, I'm rather glad of it, for I've been afraid all along that Ike would get his vessel ready before I could kill that bear."

This remark raised a laugh, but Henry continued unconcernedly:

"Oh, I'll have him one of these days, never you fear. I have discovered some new evidence to-day, and I believe I know where to watch for him now."

"What's your new evidence?" asked James incredulously.

"Well, in the first place, I have found where he has been committing ravages on the corn."

"What!" exclaimed James with real interest.

"On the corn, I said," replied Henry, coolly. "It's over on the back side of the field where nobody ever goes. Ah, he's a cunning fellow—as sly as a fox."

"What has he been doing to the corn?"

"Eating it and trampling down some of it. In some places the stalks have been torn down, and in others the ears have been pulled off without breaking the stalks much. I found some husks that had evidently been bitten off the ears, and some pieces of ears scattered about. It was the bear—I'm satisfied of that."

"It might have been some smaller animal," returned James.

"A smaller animal couldn't have left a bear's footstep behind him," Henry replied. "I found a bear's track there, as sure as the world, and a big one, too. That fellow must be a patriarch. Why, it was eight or nine inches long."

"Who ever heard of a bear's foot nine inches long?" laughed James.

"Not a large foot for a grizzly," yawned Ransom: "sometimes measure more than that—claws alone six inches long."

"Well, here's a claw for you to measure, Rans," said Henry, pulling out of his pocket what appeared to be a very large and long bear's claw and handing it to Ransom. "I found it over there, and I think it's pretty good evidence."

All examined the claw with great interest. Finally Duncan, holding it in his hand and looking it over carefully, said:

"It is certainly mysterious. That is a large specimen, and it undoubtedly came from a bear's foot—a grizzly, do you think, Ransom?"

"No doubt of it."

"And you found it, you say, Henry, in the cornfield?"

"No, I found it just outside the field, where the ground had been dug up by somebody. I suppose Sam did it when he went out hunting for medicines."

"I never did any digging," said Sam. "I got some thoroughwort, but that was down on the peninsula."

"Then I don't know who could have done it. It looked exactly as though someone had been digging for roots."

"Was it of recent occurrence?" asked Ransom.

"No; it had been rained on, anyhow."

"Might have been done by Mr. Grizzly before the corn grew large enough for him," said Ransom.

"Do grizzlies dig?" asked Will.

"Certainly—great diggers, but no climbers. Claws adapted to digging—large and powerful. The North American grizzly (*ursus ferox*) is a very large and ferocious variety of the Ursidae family. Sometimes measures nine feet from tip of nose to tail; nose elongated and narrow, very short tail, large foot, and claws measuring between six and seven inches in length. Present specimen answers description admirably."

"That's so, it does," returned Henry, greatly delighted. "I know he's a big fellow, for his footstep proves that well enough, and I found two or three of them, all just alike. I didn't think about a grizzly, but that must be what he is, and that probably accounts for the way he has avoided my trap. Probably he is too large to get into it."

"But how could an animal lose one of his claws?" asked Duncan. "You surely do not think this belongs to a living grizzly bear, Ransom? I should consider it a very serious matter if we had proof that such a formidable animal roamed this island."

"Here is the claw," replied Ransom. "No one knows what accident may have happened to

his bearship. This claw was evidently broken off at the root. An accident may have caused it, or Mr. Grizzly may have been suffering from some disease in his foot which caused it to be more easily broken—nothing unreasonable in that, seems to me."

"Perhaps somebody dropped the claw," suggested James: "not any of this crowd, of course, but that poor fellow you buried might."

"Mere supposition, Jim, and extremely improbable," answered Ransom. "That wouldn't account for the digging. No; too remote a possibility from every point of view. We must put all the evidence together—ground torn up, claw discovered on the ground, depredations on the corn, *et cetera*."

"But if the grizzly is no climber how did he get into our stockade that day?"

"It is said," returned Ransom, "that when the grizzly is fully grown the formation of his claws prevents his ascending trees; but that would not necessarily hinder one from getting over our palisades, for he could easily reach the top of them with his paw. As to accomplishments, the grizzly's forte is digging, not climbing, but it does not follow that he could not mount a fence if he could reach the top of it."

"Well," said Duncan seriously, "I think we shall have to try to find this formidable enemy and dispose of him. Henry's unaided efforts thus far have been futile; but if we all turn out I am sure we can discover his retreat. The presence here of a grizzly bear is certainly a very serious matter, especially as we will have to reside here for many months to come. But it is strange that none of us have ever encountered him. Does the grizzly avoid human beings like some other animals, Ransom?"

"Usually, if he scents danger, unless suddenly surprised or defending his young. Henry's constant search has caused this one to scent danger, undoubtedly, and it is doubtful if we could allure him to the same spot—don't believe Buster will get a shot at him now by watching the corn. And then, the grizzly's diet largely affects the ferocity of his disposition. If he lives on roots and herbage, as this one probably does, he is less ferocious and more likely to flee at the approach of a man. Although rather unwieldy, he is capable of moving with great rapidity, and can quickly get out of sight. If food should be scarce with him, though, he would be a very dangerous fellow-citizen, for he wouldn't hesitate to pick one of us up and carry him off; and he could do it, for his strength is something prodigious. He preys upon the buffalo in the Rockies, and has been known to carry off a bison weighing several hundred pounds. A party of voyagers many years ago, going up the Saskatchewan, had one of their number picked up and carried off one day. They were camping for the night, when suddenly a grizzly sprang into their midst, and seizing one of their number, made off with him. The others made off too, frightened out of their wits—excepting one who had presence of mind enough to seize his rifle and follow to the rescue."

"Where did you pick up that interesting incident, Dr. Dryasdust?" asked Frank.

"Dr. Richardson, English traveler and naturalist, relates it in one of his works—no doubt about its authenticity."

"Did the poor fellow escape—was he saved, I mean?" asked Walter.

"Yes, with a broken arm and a few bites."

"My!" exclaimed Willie, "it won't be safe for any of us to go outdoors at all if there is such an animal as that roaming around."

"We must hunt him up and dispatch him," said Henry.

"And now is the time to do it," added Carl. "I wanted to do it long ago, and it won't do to wait any longer. Pretty soon it'll freeze up, and that will render it more difficult."

"He'll go into his den for the winter," said Richard, "and there'll be no danger from him till spring. All bears do that, don't they, Rans?"

"The *ursus ferox* appears to be an exception to the rule, partially at least. The cubs and females hibernate, but the old males often come out in winter to hunt for food."

"Then we must find that fellow and kill him immediately—it's imperative," said William, seriously.

"Yes, but we must proceed very cautiously," said Duncan. "This will be the most formidable enterprise we have yet undertaken, but I see no help for it. Our safety will be more seriously menaced than ever in the winter, I fear, when his bearship will find it more difficult to find food."

"We'll have to hunt for his den," said Henry; "and that must be on the north shore among the cliffs somewhere. I'm satisfied of that, for I've searched everywhere else thoroughly."

"Is there any way to get down under the cliffs from the land side?" asked Duncan.

"I have never been able to find one."

"The best way," said Carl, "would be to go around by water; but there it is, you see—we have no boat."

"I wonder if the canoe could be recovered," said Duncan.

"I know where it is," replied Henry. "I found it one day down by Pen Point and pulled it in shore. It didn't seem to be damaged any."

"I wish you had told us about it," said Isaac, "for we might have brought her home—she's worth saving if she's whole. I supposed she was all stove up before this time."

"I would have spoken about it," Henry responded, "but I always forgot it when I saw you alone, and when the fellows were about, well—you see, it was rather a—I didn't s'pose it was much good, anyhow, and—well, I didn't want to make anybody feel bad, that's all."

As he blundered through this explanation, Henry looked inadvertently at Marshall, and all understood that a generous delicacy of feeling had caused him to refrain from publicly announcing his discovery of the boat, the theft of which had caused so much distress and trouble.

Marshall hung his head and said nothing, but Tom laughed and exclaimed:

"Fiddlesticks, Buster! You needn't have been so awfully afraid."

"I am sure we all—excepting Thomas, perhaps—fully appreciate your motive, Henry," said Duncan. "It is a generous one and does you honor; and you have made a very important discovery, one that will help us greatly in our present emergency. We will find use for the canoe; but my own opinion is that an expedition by water alone would accomplish very little. There should be one by land also, and the two can co-operate. It is imperative that we search those cliffs on both sides, and the sooner we get about it the better, I think."

After some further discussion it was decided to start the very next day, provided it was found that the condition of the canoe would permit.

Carl was chosen to go as navigator, and Richard, Samuel, Frank and Ransom were to form his crew. Richard, however, was to be in charge of the expedition as soon as a landing should be made under the cliffs.

On the following morning Isaac and Henry went with them to the place where the boat had been discovered, which they found to be perfectly water-tight and uninjured. The mast was broken, however, and the sail badly torn. These they therefore abandoned, and having bailed out the water and put in their rifles, together with a well-filled lunch basket, the expedition started, rowing with two pairs of oars.

Isaac and Henry returned to the falls, and shortly afterwards the land expedition also started. Patrick, James and Thomas were left with the little boys in charge of the house and shop. Felix was also left behind, much against his will.

The expedition by water rowed laboriously around East Point, and the sun was high in the heavens before they passed it. As they approached the northeastern shore of the island they found the water shallow and interspersed with innumerable rocks, many of which did not appear above the surface. They were obliged, therefore, to proceed with the greatest caution, and it was afternoon before they sighted Lone Rock, lying about three-fourths of a mile west of Rock Point.

Here their difficulties increased, for the invisible rocks seemed to multiply on every hand. Richard was at the bow, watching with the utmost care and signalling to Carl, who was guided in his steering entirely by the signals. Finding at last that they were making very little progress, they determined to go out into deep water. This movement brought them a long distance into the lake, about equally distant from Rock Point and Lone Rock.

Here they paused to deliberate and look for a channel by which they might approach the cliffs.

"There must be a channel here somewhere," Carl said; "and now I believe I know where it is. Look down towards Rock Point! You see the water is full of ripples in that direction, but

can's shop and spent hours in some secret occupation. Sometimes Duncan was with them, and finally Isaac was admitted to their meetings. They always barricaded the door and steadily refused to reveal what took place. The others were constantly on the *qui vive* to find out the mystery, but it was well kept, and none of them ever suspected what was going on. This lasted ten days, and then the secret meetings suddenly ceased.

Soon afterwards there came a great thaw lasting two days. The melting snow ran in rivulets around the house, and the high banks in front began to sink in great sloughing masses, rendering all outdoor sports very disagreeable.

In the afternoon of the second day the mercury fell, and at bedtime the weather was intensely cold.

On the following morning the boys were awakened by the mutterings of Pat, who had risen early to start his fire. He was poking the embers in the fireplace and soliloquizing in the following strain:

"Arrah! So it's out, is the secret, at last! But it's better I was thinkin' of the literary capacities of thim b'ys, I was indade. Av it was agin to their appetites, it's not the way bit notice yonder yez would see, but a volume as big as the house. Tin days of labor wid mystery and barricadin' of doors for the loikes of that bit o' writin'! It's the corn male that's befuddled their brains—the undistilled whisky that's in it, and they take it in such enormous quantities! It's a wonder their jaws doesn't ache wid rheumatism! Av it was cookin' the whole crop I was, crib and all, it's niver a breath they would draw till the last drap had vanished and shtrangulation had inded their days! Tin days wasted writin' a way bit piece o' printin' no bigger than the crown of me hat—av there was a crown in it, bad luck to me poverty!"

"Pat, what do you find to grumble about this bright morning?" called Ransom from his bed.

"Grumble, is it? It's grumble you would yourself, I'm thinkin'. Misther Shtorey, av ye had to make a fire wid all the coals quinned out wid the cowlid."

"No; but you were talking about a piece of printing, or something. What is it?"

"The way bit yonder is it ye mane? Indade, it's the worruk of Misther Frank and thim, and a sorra showin' it is after tin days of mystery and labor under lock and key."

This conversation awoke others, and in a few moments half a dozen pairs of eyes were curiously reading what Frank and Will had posted in a conspicuous place the night before. It was printed with a pen in large letters on a piece of birch bark, and read as follows:

"The pleasure of your company is requested at Great Bay, Thursday, December the fourteenth, between the hours of eight a. m. and ten p. m., to participate in an entertainment provided at great labor and expense by certain benevolent individuals interested in the welfare of the young. A number of wild animals will

be on exhibition, whose playful antics are expected to contribute greatly to the amusement of the guests."

This notice caused a great deal of merry comment. All thought it had something to do with the mystery of Duncan's shop, and naturally their curiosity was greatly excited.

Duncan smiled but said nothing. Isaac pretended not to notice anything that was going on. Will Staples and Frank Burton strove to look very serious, but the twitching of the corners of their mouths showed that a mighty struggle was going on within.

At the breakfast table, amid the buzz of excited conversation, Duncan remarked, laughingly:

"Your surmises are all wrong, boys. Not one of you has guessed the secret; but now I am going to tell you what I propose to do. There is excellent skating on the bay, and I am going to try it after breakfast."

So saying, he reached under his seat and pulled out a clumsy pair of skates.

"I advise you all," he added, "to take a peep under your seats. Perhaps Santa Claus has remembered you also, in anticipation of Christmas."

Underneath the long seats that stood permanently around the table, Pat had ingeniously contrived some broad shelves which he used as receptacles for various articles belonging to the table. There Will and Frank had concealed the skates. The boys drew them out and for a moment sat in silent surprise. Then Carl found his tongue.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" he cried. "Three cheers for the skates and the skate makers!" And in spite of mouths full of corncake and potato the cheers were given with a will.

"How did you fellows manage to make them?" asked Henry when quiet was restored.

"It was a very simple operation," replied Duncan. "We cut off some pieces of strap iron, and after rounding up one end in the shape of a runner, welded on some croes-pieces and punched holes in them for fastening on the woods. I did the welding, but the others made the woods and riveted them on. I think they have done the work remarkably well. Now you must contrive some way to tie them on to your feet, yourselves."

"Well," said Sam, "there is one thing I would like to know. Where are the wild animals, whose antics were to contribute to our amusement?"

"You'll see!" answered Frank.

The boys were wild with excitement and left their breakfast half eaten to hunt for straps and strings, and then rushed pellmell down to the bay to try their new skates.

Frank and Sam followed together, and Frank asked:

"Do you see where the wild animals come in now, Sam?"

"Ha, yes; but I think you fellows were long-headed to anticipate it."

"Not a bit. We felt sure there would be

skating on that bay before the winter was over, and we knew that if we could manufacture some skates the boys would be crazy over it. Ice like that, and skates, are enough to turn the head of any ordinary mortal."

Pat was astonished to find his table so quickly deserted. But curiosity got the better of his surprise, and he hurried with his work and followed the others to the bay, where he found Niconimo an interested spectator of the scene.

Neither of them had ever learned to skate. They stood on the shore together, watching the sport and conversing in a very friendly manner, as they often did in Pat's kitchen.

"Ugh! Good fun slide that way, eh!" said Niconimo.

"Indade, I suppose it is for him that loikes it," responded the Irishman cynically. "Thim b'ys is all runnin' to skates now, as they did to johnnycakes but yesterday. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good! Did ye notice, Economy, how they was all runnin' away from the table widout 'atin' the usual quantity? Now av thim skates will be savin' the victuals at that rate, it's meself will be in favor of the same."

"Eat plenty when go home," briefly responded the Indian.

"Ah, mebbe you're right. Now you're shp'akin' of it, it's fearful I am that that kind of ixercise will be tindin' to increase the appetite. Ah, well, the w'akeness of human nature is one of the frailties of life, Economy, as it's yourself will be findin' out whin ye get a furdher insight into the aminities of civilization. But it's not in America that ye'll find thim same at their best, mind that! It's Ould Ireland that presints them in all their beauty."

"Ole Ireland! Who he?"

"Who is he! Och! It's not a man I'm shp'akin' about. It's a place, a country across the say. That same is the quane of the worruld, me lad. Were ye niver hearin' of it before?"

"No hear not'ing 'bout him. What he like?"

"What is it loike? It's a counthry wid foinie cities and sainery, to say nothing of mountains and bogs, besides a r'asonable quantity of stone houses and landlords, and potaties in plinty."

"No can hunt grizzly there, eh?"

"Grizzlies, is it? Ah, bad luck to your ignorance, Economy! It's not undershtandin' me description ye are at all at all. It's a narrow himisphere ye've lived in, me b'y. Did ye niver be studyin' geography?"

"Study him book little. No like read much that time."

"Yes, I was hearin' about it. Ye runned away from school. Shure, and ye should have gone back again and graduated. Now I'll be tellin' ye a sacret, Economy. It's meself has runned away from school many a toime in me b'yhood; but I was afther goin' back again the next day."

"What for go back? So him teacher tie up make you be flog, eh?"

"No; it was me father took me in hand. It was but sildom he was afther catchin' me at the trick, though; but whin he did catch me it

was a good floggin' he was givin' me and sindin' me back. So it was complatin' me iducation I was, do ye see?"

"So can read good, eh?"

"R'adin', is it? Faith, av r'adin' was all, it's but a shmall matther iducation would be. But there's pinmanship, and shpellin', and cipherin', to say nothing about geography that tells ye all about Ould Ireland. Whin ye've learned all thim things, Economy, it'll be toime to think ye've about completed your iducation. But here comes Misther Frank and Will, glidin' along wid the aise and shpade of a railway train. Arrah, Misther Will! What is it ye'll be havin'—a cornodger?"

"No, Pat," laughed Will as he drew up; "we've had enough till dinner time. We want you and Niconimo to come with us on the ice. You can take our skates. Come on!"

"Shure, and it's learnin' to skate first, we'll be."

"How can you learn till you try?" asked Frank, cutting a figure eight and darting around in circles, to the great admiration of Niconimo, who seemed desirous of trying the sport.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, "slide good. Try him, Pat!"

"Will ye be tryin' it yerself, Economy?"

"Me go too—make good fun, ha!"

Frank and Will quickly transferred their skates to the feet of the two novices, who stood up, assisted by the boys, and began to make awkward and ludicrous attempts to skate.

Pat had no control over his feet, which flew out from under him, and he sat down heavily upon the ice, greatly to the amusement of the boys.

"Och!" he cried, "the ould b'y is in thim skates."

"No, no," laughed Will; "the skates are all right. Try it again! I'll help you." And he proceeded to assist the helpless Irishman to his feet.

Niconimo fared no better. He quickly lost his balance and came down on all fours. Preserving the utmost gravity of countenance, he grunted:

"Ugh! No easy make him skate go, eh?"

"I'll tell you what to do, Niconimo," said Will, slyly winking at Frank. "Take hold of Pat's hand and then you two can help each other, you know."

The Indian was assisted to his feet, and then he and Pat grasped each other's hands with a strong grip, each depending upon the other for support.

"Now," said Frank, "you must both let your feet slide first one way and then the other, like this! See? Now then, hang on tight, and Will and I'll steady you a little."

Suiting the action to the word, Frank and Will guided them some distance from the shore and then gave them a vigorous push, sending them sliding away by themselves far out over the glare ice. They clung to each other desperately, afraid to let go for fear of losing their balance, until Niconimo, trying to carry out Frank's instructions, got his feet in Pat's way

and tripped him up. Pat went down sprawling at full length, while Niconimo, letting go his hold, whirled around, slid backwards a few feet and sat down with a grunt.

"What for you no stan' up, Pat?" he gravely asked.

"Shtand up, is it?" answered Pat, vainly endeavoring to recover an upright position; "shtand up, is it? Why did ye be puttin' your clumsy fut in the way? Bad luck to your clumsiness, Economy! Do ye suppose a man can skate wid a ten pound obstroction a-thrustin' itself in front of his fate? Ah, ye'll niver be l'arnin' to skate. Ye get too ixcite, me b'y. We was goin' foine, but ye had to get ixcited and put your fut in it, ye did."

This brief conversation, which was carried on while the two sat confronting each other on the ice, was great fun for the boys, who gathered around them in high glee, offering a multitude of suggestions and urging them to another attempt.

After another trial with no better result, Pat excused himself on the plea of having to prepare the dinner, but Niconimo persevered and became an expert skater before the season was over.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

**A**S CHRISTMAS drew near, Duncan determined to make the season as bright and homelike for the boys as possible. He sent some of them to gather branches of evergreen to trim their apartment, and held a long consultation with Pat about preparing an agreeable surprise for them at their Christmas dinner.

Friday and Saturday were therefore busy days—Christmas being the following Monday—and all were very happy with bright anticipations. Beautiful wreaths of cedar and hemlock were wound and hung in festoons about the room; Sam and Carl made some designs to adorn the walls; Walter and Willie cut the letters "Merry Christmas" out of white birch bark and fastened them on the chimney above the fireplace.

Meanwhile Patrick, looking very wise and mysterious, began his preparations for the great feast. Imitating the example of Frank and Will, he barred the door into the dry-house, refusing to admit any intruders until the special task in which he was engaged should be finished. Then he removed the fastening and during the remainder of the day greeted all questioners with a broad grin and many nods and winks, bidding them "be aisy and 'bide the fistic board."

Sunday passed very quietly. The service was held as usual, but the day was dark and gloomy, and a heavy snowstorm kept all within doors. In the afternoon the wind arose, and before night the light snow was piled in heavy drifts. At bedtime it was still snowing, and in the night they were awakened by the roaring of the storm, whose weird shrieks and groans re-

minded them of the perils through which they had passed.

Duncan arose and put some wood on the fire, and, breathing a silent thanksgiving for the snug retreat in which his boys were all safely housed, returned to his bed and fell asleep.

The first to awake on the following morning was Pat, as usual. He arose, and throwing some wood on the slumbering embers, sat down to await the coming of daylight. The room was dark, excepting as it was partially illuminated by the blaze in the fireplace, whose flicker made the windows darker than ever. The boys had not been accustomed to closing the shutters, because the house was found to be sufficiently warm without them, and they had no fears of any intrusion from outside.

Patrick's meditations were soon interrupted by the voices of the sleepers, who awoke one after another and began to exchange the greetings of the season.

"Now," drawled Ransom from under his blankets, "hope you're all satisfied. Roused me out of a sound sleep fifteen times to say 'Merry Christmas!' Let's have it quiet now, till it's time to get up."

"It's time now, Rans," answered Carl; "for this is Christmas, you know."

"So I have been reminded about a hundred times already. But I see there is to be no rest for the weary in this hubbub."

"What time do you think it is, Rans?" asked Richard.

"Four or five; why?"

"Because my watch says nine."

"Your watch must have the rickets, for the windows are as dark as a pocket."

"Then mine has the rickets too," cried Will, "for I am ten minutes past nine."

"So am I—twelve minutes after," said Sam; "and I set my watch by the sun at noon last Saturday."

"The sun being a pretty accurate timepiece as a rule," remarked Frank, as he struggled to get his hand through the rent lining of his coat sleeve. "I am inclined to think that the rickets are all in you fellows' heads, and that the snow has darkened our windows."

"The snow, is it?" cried Pat, springing up. "Och! and av that is the case it's a late breakfast ye'll be gettin' the mornin', and me a-sittin' here waitin' for daylight and listenin' to yer blatherin'!"

He rushed into the shed, but in a moment returned, exclaiming:

"Wirra, wirra! A sorra counthry is it, wid the snow iverywhere and the shtingin' cowlid! It's full, is the shed, and me kindlin' is buried under a drift as high as the head of yez, and there's niver a chance to see out at all at all. It's buried we are all of us and obliterated intirely, for niver a sthone will be erected to mark the spot!"

The boys all hurried out and found that the snow had sifted in during the night and, as Pat had said, was piled in great drifts against the door of the dry-house, by the side of which he was in the habit of piling his kindling. The



shed was dark, an immense drift filling the opening completely.

A half hour's shoveling cleared the way to the dry-house and let in the bright rays of the sun from the front. The boys then opened a path to the creek and chopped away the ice, so that Pat could have access to the water. They next turned their attention to the drifts around the house, and by the time their breakfast was ready had cleared away the snow from the windows. Their snug apartment now assumed a bright and cheerful aspect. The cold was intense, and they were glad to seek the warmth of the roaring fire once more.

About one o'clock, after their Christmas service was over, Pat betook himself to the dry-house, again barricading the door and keeping all intruders out. It was nearly four o'clock before he reappeared, and then he summoned them all to their Christmas dinner.

They found the table set with unusual care, the tablecloths fresh and clean, their edges decorated with sprigs of evergreen, and the holes, which were very numerous and large by reason of continued use, ingeniously covered by dishes and improvised mats. Lying by the side of each plate was a *menu* written in Patrick's own handwriting, as follows, including capitals and spelling:—

"Bil of fair wid fore Courses.

1st is Soop of course.

2nd is roasted Fool wid roast Potaties & gravy.

3rd is chicken Py wid other vigitables.

4rdt is dessert, and that same is a Sakrit.

Gintlemen will plaze be aisy.

"Patrick Reilly."

Pat listened with a beaming countenance to the comments that passed from one to another on his bill of fare. The "roasted fool" caused no little merriment and drove all sad thoughts away.

The boys well knew Pat's skill in making the most of his limited resources, but the variety he now offered them was a very agreeable surprise. They discussed it, therefore, in high spirits and with excellent appetites.

Pat then removed the dishes, brushing the crumbs with great ceremony—a service he had never before condescended to perform—and to their great surprise placed before Duncan four large pumpkin pies, which looked to them as luscious and inviting as though made in some rural New England home.

"Now, Mистер Duncan," said he, "which will ye be havin' in the way of biverage, tay or coffee tay."

"I think I could decide more easily, Pat," responded Duncan, laughing. "if you would tell me what your tea and coffee are made of."

"The wan is made of corn and the other of pays, both parched and pounded, and both highly recommended as agreeable to the taste and hiltly to the digestion."

"But which is coffee and which is tea?"

"The wan is coffee, I'm tellin' ye, and the other is tay."

"Ha, ha! That's rather indefinite; but never mind, bring me some coffee to begin with."

"Is it sugar and millik ye'll have in it?"

"If you please."

"Come, come, Pat," cried Frank; "don't close this sumptuous banquet with an aggravation like that! The bare mention of sugar will make some of these fellows glum for the rest of the day."

"And shouldn't I be mintionin' the things I have in me mainyou?"

"But sugar and milk are too preposterous to think of for a moment."

"Arrah! That remains to be seen," replied Pat; and he pompously placed upon the table a bowl of white sugar and two cans of condensed milk, adding as he did so, "It's meself and Mистер Duncan has been preparin' what'll aw'ten your appetites for Christmas; but I'm thinking it's a dangerous experiment, since they made but little incouragement."

"Milk and sugar! Hurrah!" cried Carl. "That's just gorgeous! Duncan, have you and Pat been saving them up all these months?"

"No; only a few weeks," answered Duncan, smiling. "These additions to our *menu* to-day have a little history, and quite an interesting one, too, I think. The evening before I left home I had the pleasure of attending a juvenile party at a neighbor's, where I went to see the sport. There were a score or more of little tots there, having a fine time. I told them of our intended camping expedition, and they asked a great many questions about it—how we were to do our cooking, what we would have to sleep on, where we were to find luxuries for our table, and many more of a similar kind. I told them we expected to take everything with us, whereupon a little girl spoke up and asked if we were going to take a cow. That raised a great laugh, and when I said that we would probably have to do without a great many things like milk and sugar, unless some of them would take pity on us and find some way to provide us with them, two or three of them seemed to think it a very serious matter indeed. The event proved that my words were taken more literally than I intended, for who should appear at our door bright and early the next morning, but two of the little girls I had been talking with the evening before, carrying these two cans of condensed milk and a package of sugar! They formally presented them to me, saying they had bought them with their own money. Of course I accepted them with many thanks, but what to do with them I did not know, for my contribution to our stores had already gone to the train. There was no room for them in my valise, and I could not carry them in my arms. At last I thought of an old overcoat, into whose ample pockets I stuffed the package of sugar and the cans, and rolled it up in a shawl strap. This gave me more luggage than I wanted to carry, but I felt it would never do to disappoint the little girls. The roll was overlooked when we unloaded our stores from the wreck, for I never saw or

thought about it until Isaac brought it to me one day about a week after we moved to the falls. He found it wedged in under a beam in a dark corner of the hold, where I suppose it had rolled during the storm. I concluded to save the sugar and milk for Christmas, and I am sure the little donors will be greatly pleased when they learn what a rare treat their gift has provided us with to-day."

"We must give them a vote of thanks on the spot," cried Richard; "and I say, Pat, you must save the rest of this sugar for some more pies some day."

"Arrah! Will ye be tellin' me how it's to be done? For av the appetites av yez all doesn't run to sugar now, it'll be a marvel."

"Right as a trivet, Pat!" cried Frank. "We'll make the most of the present opportunity. We're in clover to-day, with our roasted 'fool' and pastry made of pumpkin sauce and corn meal, to say nothing of the 'tay tay and coffee tay.' But how did you manage to bake your pies?"

"In a timperary oven made of two big earthen pans, and for pies and puddin's they does the worruk dacently well."

Thus the conversation proceeded until the repast was ended, when Frank arose and requested the privilege of saying a few words.

"In the first place," he began, "let me remark to you, Mr. Patrick Reilly, that we desire to express to you our sincere thanks for the excellent dinner your skill has provided. I do not believe the buxom lass 'of an hundred and seventy pounds avoirdupois,' who sighs for her absent swain on the rocky hillsides of Loch Foyle, could have done any better herself under the circumstances. Now, while you are here, a shipwrecked hero, pining for her society and growing jolly and stout under the strain, it may be some consolation to you to know that it is our firm resolve always to honor your efforts in this line, by disposing of your choice viands with hearty appetites and good digestion."

"Ah, but there's little naed of ye tellin' me that," interrupted Pat.

"Very true," continued Frank; "but it speaks well for your skill, and I repeat that we all appreciate your ready compliance with our demands, and especially the sumptuous manner in which you have satisfied them on the present occasion."

"Well, it's comfortin', is that same," responded Pat.

"But pleasant as it is," continued Frank, "to dwell upon so inviting a theme, it becomes my duty to turn to another and more serious one. Captain Isaac Wilkins, your headgear, I am sorry to say, has been a great mortification to your friends for a long time! We are proud of you, but we cannot say as much for your hat. Now, it gives me pleasure to present you with a fur cap made of the skin of the otter, a product of our own domain, the material for which has been prepared in the best manner by the skill and science of our learned friend, Dr. Dryasdust. That battered nondescript piece of felt which you innocently call your hat, is about

to be superseded by a lordly chapeau that will properly adorn your massive brow, lend a dignity to your profession and be an honor to your country. You missed your so-called hat one day, and it reappeared in a very mysterious manner indeed. We had abstracted it to take the measure of your head, which, by the way, we found to be a remarkable one, if the shape of that hat is any criterion to go by! This cap is of domestic manufacture, the product of our own skill, and we all desire that you accept it as a token of our esteem and affection. We honor you, Captain Ike, as a man, a sailor, a companion and a friend."

Frank then sat down, and Isaac, taking the cap—which was very beautiful, lined with silk, some of the boys having contributed their neckties for that purpose—taking the cap, Isaac fumbled it awkwardly, not knowing what to say.

"Put it on, Ike!" they cried.

Isaac complied amid their hearty cheers, and, looking around with a flushed face, said:

"Boys, I wasn't looking for nothing like this. It is certainly a handsome piece of work, and I thank you kindly for the gift. And I want to say, besides, that if I should be prospered and get the 'Venture' afloat in the spring, as with your help I expect to do—for you've showed a generous spirit to me that I shall never forget—I shall hold the vessel at your service for a cruise every summer, and shall consider the bill already paid by your kindness to me since the wreck. So all you've got to do is to command me, and the 'Venture' shall take you anywhere within reason."

The boys applauded this little speech with great enthusiasm. Pat joined in heartily, exclaiming loudly amid the general uproar:

"Arrah! And it's meself will be goin' and cookin' for yez, fra gratis!"

Frank then addressed Duncan, holding in his hand another package.

"I express the unanimous sentiment of this community, Joseph Duncan," he said, "when I say that you have won our deepest respect and love. This you have done by your lofty and generous Christian spirit. You haven't been thinking of yourself during all these months, but of us and our welfare, night and day. We know it, Duncan. We haven't been blind to your noble self-sacrifice on our behalf, and we desire that you should know that we appreciate it. Your bright example has not only made the Christianity you profess seem lovely in our eyes, but it has taught some of us to try harder than ever to be true to our Christian training and to stand up for the right. Here is a little token of our love and appreciation. It is a piece of our own handiwork. It is a fur coat, or hunting jacket, whichever you please to call it. It isn't cut according to the latest Parisian style, owing to our present lack of facilities for finding out what the latest fashion is. Its style and make-up are therefore strictly domestic, which for warmth and convenience are not to be excelled. It is substantially made, being sewed together with a darning needle and a small trout line! The lining is of silk, your friends having

contributed handkerchiefs and scarfs for that purpose. So, like your renowned namesake of old, you have a coat of many colors, but your colors are all on the inside! The buttons, you observe, are all of silver. We succeeded in getting together seven quarters, which, by dint of patient filing and punching, have been converted into very handsome buttons. They ought to be made of pure gold, every one of them; but owing to the depressed state of our finances we were obliged to proceed on a silver basis! I take pleasure in presenting this to you, Duncan, as a token of our heartfelt esteem and affection."

The boys all arose and gave three hearty cheers of approval. As soon as it was quiet Duncan replied, his voice trembling with emotion:

"I thank you, boys, with all my heart. I shall value this gift more than any Christmas present that I ever received. Whatever I have done has been because I love you all, and it has been a pleasure for me to plan and labor for your interest. But I think it is due to you to say that were it not for your loyal and manly support and co-operation, my poor efforts would have been utterly futile. I shall never cease to be grateful for your hearty kindness and generosity to me. It is, and will ever be, my constant prayer that God's choicest blessings may rest upon you all forever."

## CHAPTER XXV.

THREE months more of winter! It was a long time, but the boys were comfortable, and the days passed very pleasantly. In January came another thaw, followed by more skating, but through the greater part of February they were almost buried in great drifts, which completely covered Duncan's shop, and obliterated all signs of the creek below the mill. The front door of the house was permanently closed, and an immense snowdrift, lying like a mountain in Pat's pathway to the falls, had to be tunneled through in order to enable him to go for water.

Many of the boys employed their leisure in writing up their diaries, keeping very full records of all their doings. Others drew maps of the island and sketches of their surroundings, partly from data gathered the previous summer. Their paper and ink had long been exhausted; but quantities of white birches grew in the vicinity of high spring which they frequently visited and stripped of their bark, cutting it into convenient shapes and sizes to use for paper. Ransom made some very good ink of potash, sumac bark and lampblack, manufacturing the first of ashes and lime, and procuring the last by the slow combustion of pitch pine. Of pens they had a good supply, and thus equipped, they indulged their literary tastes through the long winter evenings.

One morning in March Richard and Marshall started to go to the high spring to procure a

quantity of bark, the supply having become exhausted. The weather was mild and cloudy, and about half an hour after they had gone it began to snow. Nothing was thought of this, because the boys had often been out in snow-storms and had never experienced any serious inconvenience from them. But this one proved to be a storm of unusual severity. Before twelve o'clock the air was so filled with rapidly falling flakes that it was impossible to distinguish objects even a short distance away.

Those who remained at home, however, did not discover this until afternoon, when Carl came in from the mill, where he had been with Isaac, and reported that coming back to the house they had lost their way and wandered down to the shore.

"We hadn't the slightest idea where we were," he said, "until I ran against the stocks we began to build last fall. Then we knew we were at the shipyard, and the only way we could get our bearings was by noticing the direction of the top timbers. I tell you, we're lucky to get back at all in such a storm as this. You can't see ten feet away. Have Marsh and Dick come?"

"No," replied Will; "but they know the ground too well to wander far out of the way, I guess. You and Ike must have been wandering in your minds."

"Well, all you've got to do is to try it. I'd like to see you or anybody else find your way in this storm," answered Carl.

Duncan hastily looked at his watch.

"What time did they start?" he asked.

"About ten o'clock," answered Walter.

"Ten o'clock!" repeated Duncan, starting to his feet. "Why, they should have been back two hours ago. I had no idea they had been gone so long. Carl, do you really think there is danger of their losing their way?"

"I don't see how they can help it. You get half a dozen steps away from this house and it might as well be a hundred miles for all you can see of it."

"Then we must go out for them while it is daylight," said Duncan with energy. "Where is Isaac? Carl, ask him if he will go with me."

"I'll go too," cried Henry, "and take my old blunderbuss to fire signals—shall I, Duncan?"

"Yes; that's an excellent idea. And I think we had better have signals fired from the house, too. That will be a guide to us both going and coming. I wish one of you would go up on the terrace and fire regularly, every fifteen minutes, and keep it up until we return."

"Aye, aye," answered Carl; "I'll see to that."

"But you ought to have four with you, at least, Duncan," said Frank, "it seems to me—in case they should happen to need any help, you know."

"That means that you would like to be the fourth, I suppose," said Duncan. "Very well; I have no objection to that arrangement, but I do not think we shall need any more. I do not anticipate any serious trouble in finding them."

They have probably strayed from their path, but we shall soon make them hear our signals."

"There's one more you ought to take," said Ranson. "Felix is your man for this kind of work. Those St. Bernards have a wonderfully keen scent, and he will prove an invaluable help, I think."

"I hadn't thought of that," Duncan replied. "Yes, Felix shall go, and we will put his powers to the test. But first we must give him some idea of what we want of him. Boys, bring some of Marshall's and Richard's clothing."

He called the dog, and holding the clothing before him, caused him to smell it, then by signs and words tried to make him understand that he was to go in search of the boys. For a moment Felix seemed to be in doubt, but at last he ran first to Richard's bed and then to Marshall's, and finding them empty, made the circuit of the room as though to make sure that they were not present. He then returned to Duncan and began to bark. He evidently understood that some unusual service was required of him in connection with the absent boys.

A little after three o'clock all hands were ready and started on a brisk walk in the direction of the high spring. They found Carl's description of the storm had not been overdrawn. They had gone but a short distance before they began to realize something of the peril of their undertaking; but this only convinced them of its grave necessity, and they pushed bravely on. They made good progress, for the crust was sufficiently strong to hold up Felix, and they all wore snowshoes.

The trees were so heavily burdened with snow, and the dense atmosphere was so thick with falling flakes, that they soon found it impossible to keep their bearings or to discover any familiar landmarks. All they could do was to press forward as nearly as possible in a straight line, hoping to reach some point where they could determine their whereabouts.

To add to their perplexity, Felix after awhile began to manifest a reluctance to follow them. He repeatedly stopped and seemed determined to go back. Duncan whistled and coaxed in vain, and was obliged at last to scold him severely before he would submit. After that he followed them, but with great reluctance, lagging behind and dropping his head with a very injured air.

They had been about twenty minutes on their way, picking their path slowly through the heavy snow, when Carl fired his second signal gun. To their great surprise, the sound came from a point directly in front of them!

"Hello! How's that?" exclaimed Henry. "Those fellows must have changed their position."

"No, that can't be," said Isaac; "I'm afraid the trouble is with us."

"Can it be possible," asked Duncan, "that we have been traveling in a circle?"

"It would seem so from that gun," answered Isaac.

"Well, I would have sworn we were going in a straight line," said Henry.

"So would I," returned Frank. "But there's no finding the points of the compass now, for we don't know whether we're east, north or west of the falls. We'll have to go back and take another start."

"No," replied Duncan, "I think not. I have a better way. I believe I know now what was the matter with Felix. We were leading him in a wrong direction and he knew it. And it was a piece of gross stupidity in us to do so. We ought to have trusted him from the first. Felix, my good fellow, we owe you an apology."

So saying, he stooped down and patted and caressed the dog, speaking the names "Marsh" and "Dick" distinctly.

"Now, Felix," he said, "go find them."

Felix did not wait for a second command, but turned abruptly and trotted away, traveling so rapidly that they found it difficult to keep up with him. Occasionally he would stop and wait for them to come up, and then resume his trot.

Carl's third gun sounded far in the rear, and they knew they were now following a direct course. Henry then began to fire at intervals as a signal to the lost boys, in case they should be wandering in the vicinity. In a short time they left the woods and struck across the open glade.

It seemed to them that they were rushing blindly forward over a trackless waste, for there was nothing visible but snow in every direction. But Felix kept on without the slightest hesitation. In ten minutes more he brought them abruptly to the great rock, whose broad, dark surface loomed up unexpectedly within six feet of them.

Here he stopped and sat down, panting, as though his work was done. Henry fired another shot and they all listened, but no answer was returned. All was still, save the moaning of the rising wind in the neighboring woods.

"They are not here, Felix," said Duncan, shaking his head; "go on—find them."

Again the dog started, passing the great rock, and in a few minutes plunged into the woods on the other side of the glade. Here he seemed to be in doubt, for he stopped again and looked up inquiringly into Duncan's face.

Duncan, meanwhile, was growing very anxious. They had gone over scarcely more than half the distance to the high spring, and now Felix began to hesitate, and the shades of night were rapidly approaching. Already the woods were perceptibly darker than when they had started.

"Felix, you must find them," he said, earnestly, almost sternly, "find them—Marsh and Dick! Go on! Go to the high spring!"

The dog obeyed, but in what direction he was leading them they had no means of knowing. They hoped he understood the command, and followed on, repeating again and again the names, "Marsh" and "Dick." He took them further into the woods and seemed to be pursuing a direct course. It was evident that he had some definite place in view, where he was accus-

tomed to going with the boys.

In a short time they perceived that they were walking on rising ground, which led them to believe they were approaching the high spring. They soon came to some small birches that had been stripped of their bark, and Isaac said the trees had certainly been stripped that very day, for their surfaces were fresh and clean.

"If that's the case," said Henry, "we must be on their track, for this is where they started from to go home."

"Yes," answered Frank; "and now the question is where they wandered to when they started. Fire another shot, Buster; perhaps they'll hear it."

Henry did so, and after listening in vain for some response they decided to begin a search of the woods. They called to Felix, but no Felix responded. They whistled and called again and again, but the dog paid no attention to their summons if, indeed, he heard them at all.

They stood a long time deliberating in great perplexity and repeating their calls, but eliciting no response from any direction. What could they do? They dared not proceed alone for fear of losing their way, and yet they felt they must not be idle. They began to fear for their own safety, for if they moved out of their footsteps they were liable to lose their bearings.

While they were thus deliberating what to do in their dilemma, supposing that Felix had deserted them and left them to their fate, they caught the sound of his deep voice in the far distance. It was scarcely audible, but they all recognized it instantly, and it filled them with hope and joy.

"There!" cried Duncan; "I believe he has found them. How unjust we have been to that noble fellow! He has been searching the woods while we stood here blaming him for deserting us. Listen!"

The barking continued, and, guided by the sound, they started in the direction indicated, pressing on as rapidly as they could.

When they reached the spot they found the dog standing with his back towards them, his feet wide apart and his head lowered, as though gazing at some object buried in the snow. He gave a quick glance at them as they approached, ceased barking and retreated from his position.

Duncan stepped forward and looked carefully for some signs of human presence, but he could see nothing. All was blank before his eyes. He was about to advance to make a closer investigation when a voice, coming apparently from some deep cavern, warned him not to approach too near. For an instant he was startled, expecting to see a great gulf open at his feet. He stopped short and shouted:

"Richard! Marshall!"

"Halloo!" came up from the depth in the same distant voice.

"Is that Richard speaking?" asked Duncan.

"Yes; and Marsh is here too."

"Where are you?"

"Down here—under the cliff!"

All retreated a step instinctively. They had unconsciously approached the cliff, and now

stood upon the very edge of its dizzy height!

"How did you fellows happen to get over the cliff?" shouted Henry.

"We don't know—only we tumbled over. We started to go home and landed here; that's all we know about it."

"Are you hurt?" asked Duncan.

"Marsh hurt his hand and I bruised my knee a little."

"Why didn't you walk around under the bluff?" asked Henry. "You could get up, you know, about half a mile further on."

"How do you know that?" asked Marshall. "We don't know what part of the cliff this is. But if we did it wouldn't do us any good, for we can't get out of this hole. The snow is about ten feet above our heads. When we fell we broke the crust and found ourselves buried up, but we've been treading the snow and have a breathing place now."

"How long have you been there?" asked Isaac.

"Four or five hours. We started for home at twelve—seems like a week," responded Richard.

"My! but we were glad to hear Felix barking!" cried Marshall. "We never expected to get out of this place. Can you get us up?"

"We'll try to find some way," replied Frank; "but you'll have to 'be aisy' awhile till we study out the problem."

"All right!" cried Richard; "but study hard, for we're getting awful tired of this position."

Henry suggested that they might be reached with a pole, but Isaac said that would be impossible.

"That cliff is fifty feet high if it's a foot," he declared. "Judging by the distance we came from them birches, which couldn't be far from the high spring, we must be about half a mile west of the pool; and if so, this is a high cliff and falls off very abrupt."

"If it hadn't been for the snow," remarked Frank, "they would never have lived to tell what happened."

"Of course," replied Isaac; "but these north winds have been piling the snow against the rocks there all winter, and that's what's saved their lives. But they must be thirty feet from the top of this cliff, at the least calculation, and we couldn't never get them up with a pole."

"Then we must have a rope," said Duncan.

"That's what we must have—a rope, sure," answered Isaac. "Now, Mr. Duncan, Felix will mind you better than any of the rest of us, for you've been giving him his orders to-day. I expect he'll take you to the falls and back in the course of an hour or so, if you've a mind to go. It's a good mile, but you'll know where you're going and won't have to stop for anything. You'll find the rope we want hanging up over my bench. I think you'd better take one of the boys with you; and I'd like to have one of 'em stay with me, for we'll have to feel around here and fix a sort of railing against some of these trees. It ain't going to be any easy job to pull them boys up without a support."

"Very well," answered Duncan. "Now, who will go with me?"

"I will," replied Henry.

"Then we'll be off. Come, Felix, lead the way. Go home!"

Felix understood the command and started instantly. The wind was now blowing from the northwest and seemed to be rapidly increasing in violence. They had not proceeded far before Duncan became convinced that the storm was growing into a blizzard, and he strove to make all possible speed. The snow was still falling rapidly and drifting in every direction. In places they had to wallow nearly to their waists, and once the dog had to be lifted out of a drift into which he had plunged; but he never lost his bearings, although it was quite dark long before they reached the house.

Meanwhile Isaac and Frank had a very difficult task before them. It was fast growing dark, and soon they found they could see absolutely nothing. They were scarcely able to distinguish the trees they were standing under, and they had to work on the verge of a precipice fifty feet high!

The first thing to be done was to find two trees growing at the very edge, against which they could roll a log to serve as a guard and support.

"It would be impossible," explained Isaac, "to draw them boys up without a log or something for the rope to slide over; at least, I wouldn't want to risk it."

"Why?" asked Frank.

"Because we can't stand at the edge without any purchase, you see; and besides, the rope would cut through and strike the rock, and them rocks are mighty sharp. It would cut the rope in two."

"Yes, I see. Well, what shall we do?"

"Well, in the first place, we'll have to find some trees right at the edge. Get down on your knees and crawl out towards the edge and feel for the butt of a tree. I presume there are plenty of 'em, but we want one as close as possible. I'll do the same here; but wait! I must cut a hole, first. I'll see if I can find a young sapling. I want to tie the pole to the trees a couple of feet above the ground to be a sort of safeguard and railing while we work."

"We'll have to be mighty careful and not let the log go over the cliff."

"Yes, indeed; it would crush them fellows if it should happen to hit 'em. Now don't move a peg from where you are, Frank. Stand as still as a post till I bring the pole."

Isaac then moved carefully away, feeling about among the trees until he found a small one that suited him. This he cut and trimmed with his hatchet, working under the greatest difficulty, for he had to be guided entirely by the sense of feeling. Then he called to Frank to get his bearings and crept cautiously back to his former position.

"Now," he asked, "are you ready?"

"Yes; I haven't moved an inch."

"All right. Now reach out this way and get hold of this pole. There! Have you got it?"

"Yes."

"Now have you got something you can tie the pole with—a watch cord or a necktie?"

"Yes; my watch cord—a strip of otter skin."

They crawled forward, pushing the pole before them and feeling their way with the greatest caution, until their hands found the edge of the cliff. But they could find no trees. They felt all along the edge in vain for some stunted tree or rocky projection, against which they could safely place a log.

"Well," said Isaac at last, "that rather stumps me. I felt sure we should find half a dozen of 'em."

"What can we do?"

"I don't know. I'll have to think awhile."

"What's the matter up there?" cried Richard from the depths.

"Oh, nothing very serious, I guess," replied Frank, "only we were looking for some trees that we don't happen to find. We'll be all right after awhile. You rest easy. 'If ye can't be aisy, be as aisy as ye can.' Are you cold?"

"Only our hands and feet; but Marsh's hand pains him badly, and it seems to be bleeding terribly, though it's as dark as a pocket here, and we can't see anything. Be as quick as you can!"

"All right! Duncan has gone for a rope, and when he gets back we'll be ready. How's your knee?"

"It aches a little, but I don't mind that much."

"You have one advantage, Dick—you don't feel the wind. It's blowing a hurricane up here."

"No; but we'll stand the hurricane if you'll hurry up and find some way to get us out of this!"

"Now," said Isaac to Frank, "I think I know how we can fix it. I'll cut down a large tree and chop a groove in one end for the rope to run in. Then we'll shove it out endways over the edge. What do you think of that idea?"

"I should think it would work, if we can prevent the log from going over the cliff."

"It won't do that after the rope is in place. Well, I can leave a few branches on it to make it more solid."

After placing the pole in an upright position to enable them to find the place again, they stepped back a few paces and began to search for a suitable tree. In the course of half an hour Isaac had one felled and trimmed, a few branches being left to give it greater stability as it rested on the ground.

They then attempted to move it forward to the edge of the cliff, but the branches prevented its rolling, and they found their united strength unequal to the task of dragging it over the ground.

As they sat waiting for Duncan—for they could do nothing more until he returned—they keenly felt the piercing wind, which now blew a gale, and their hands and feet ached with the biting cold. They were compelled to bestir themselves to keep from being frost-bitten.

At last the murmur of approaching voices greeted their ears, and then the glimmer of a light suddenly appeared in their midst. Duncan had brought a lantern; and he had also taken the precaution to tie a cord to Felix's collar, for the intense darkness rendered it very difficult to follow his leading. Ransom, Will and Sam also accompanied him. With this addition to their force Isaac and Frank had no further difficulty.

The lantern was tied to the pole, and its bright beams were found to be a very great assistance. The tree was soon in its place. Then



"That vessel is a schooner. Isn't it?"—Page 91.

the rope was lowered with a noose made in the end, and Marshall was safely drawn up the cliff. The rope was again lowered for Richard, but when the boys began to pull it came up so easily that they thought it was empty and lowered it again. Richard called to them from the bottom of the well:

"Pull ahead! That's our birch bark. I don't propose to lose that after all this trouble."

The bark was accordingly drawn up, and

afterwards Richard himself was safely landed on the bluff.

"Well, Dick, I must say you're a plucky fellow," said Will. "It's precious little I'd have thought about the bark, after getting into such a scrape as that."

"It went down with us; and it's what we came for, isn't it?"

"Of course. But how did it happen, Dick?"

"How did we happen to go over the cliff? Well, we started for home—and I am dead sure we started right—and when we were 'most to the great rock, as we supposed, down went Marsh out of sight, and before I had a chance to recover myself, I was floundering in the deep snow close beside him."

"You were just a trifle surprised, I suppose!" remarked Frank.

"Surprised! Well, I shouldn't have been more so if we had suddenly landed in Africa," Richard responded; "and it was a long time before we began to understand what had happened. I would have wagered a farm against your hat that in ten minutes more we would have reached the great rock."

All hands now started for home, where they arrived after a tedious and laborious walk of an hour.

Felix dropped as soon as he entered the house and lay for a long time panting, as though completely exhausted. But he was the hero of the day. The boys lavished upon him the most devoted and affectionate attentions, and brought him some of the choicest morsels from the table.

Pat had a good supper and roaring fire ready for their enjoyment. The warm atmosphere soon developed a few frozen ears and noses, but otherwise those exposed to the severity of the blizzard suffered no serious consequences.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

**S**PRING came at last, and with it very busy times in our little community. Isaac had built a small boat during the winter, which he placed on the creek as soon as it was free from ice. Meanwhile the keel of the vessel was laid, and from that time the work of construction was vigorously pushed.

Sam followed the workmen with his paint brush, so that when the schooner was ready to launch, her hull had received a heavy coat of white paint which gave her a handsome appearance.

The launching, which took place one Saturday in the latter part of May, was a great occasion and filled the boys with unbounded enthusiasm. Isaac had made his preparations very carefully. His "ways" of heavy plank, laid lengthwise under the bilges of the vessel and extending into the water, and his "cradle" of smooth timbers resting upon them, had been the work of many days, so anxious was he that everything should be in perfect order to insure a successful launch.

Then the resources of the little community

were taxed to the utmost to find sufficient grease to besmear the under sides of the timbers, which were to slide upon the "ways" and fall from the vessel as she glided into the water. This, however, was finally accomplished, as the calking had been done, by the ingenuity of Isaac, assisted by Ransom's ready information.

When everything was ready Carl and Sam at a signal from Isaac knocked the "dogshores" away, and the vessel slid down easily, stern foremost, into the water. Cheer after cheer went up from her deck as she floated slowly and gracefully away from the bank. Isaac then threw out his anchor, and the "Venture," rebuilt after so many months of toil and difficulty, rode safely in the bay awaiting her full equipment.

Sunday, the tenth of June, was the last day spent on the island. It was with mingled feelings of joy and sadness that the boys took part that memorable morning in the last service to be held together. When it was over they removed to the schooner, where all their stores, excepting their bedding, had been carried the day before. That night they were to sleep in the cabin of the vessel.

At daybreak the following morning Isaac was on deck, anxiously scanning the horizon for signs of the weather. Everything was clear and promising, and he began his preparations to sail. First, taking Carl and Richard with him, he went out in a small boat with a sounding-line to find a channel into the deep water of the lake. The task was soon accomplished, and about eight o'clock the boys weighed anchor and began the homeward voyage.

On the following Thursday afternoon old Captain Wilkins sat on his doorstep talking with a friend. His hair had grown rapidly gray during the past year, and he seemed to have lost much of the stalwart vigor that had characterized him in former days.

"I sort o' dread a long voyage lately, Mr. Henderson," he was saying. "It didn't use to be so, but since I lost my boy it's been different. That broke me up wonderful. It was unexpected, you see, and he must have been dead three weeks or more before I had the least idea of it."

"How did it happen?"

"Wal, you see, the fact is, I don't exactly know myself. He started to take a crowd of young fellows to Chicago to the World's Fair, and I s'pose was struck by the big storm that passed over these lakes a year ago. It must have struck him the second day after he sailed. There was several vessels lost, but they was all heard from but his'n. We never could get no trace of the vessel, and I s'pose he must have gone down in deep water, for if the schooner had been drove ashore she'd have been found. Ah, well! Ike was a likely boy and a good sailor. He must have been struck abeam, and it must have been awful sudden."

"Was nothing ever found?"

"Wal, yes, we did find his yawl, but we couldn't get no further trace. You see, they'd

been gone nigh about three weeks when I begun to get letters from the parents of the boys—and they was a lively lot of youngsters, I can tell ye—sayin' they hadn't heard anything from 'em, and wantin' to know if I knew what had become of 'em. That set me to thinkin' serious, though I didn't feel uneasy till we found out that the boys hadn't been to Chicago at all. Then their folks all come here and we started a thorough and systematic search, and kept it up for three weeks. After awhile a sloop sailed in here from somewhere up on the Georgian Bay, and the captain, hearin' about the case, reported that the day after the storm he picked up a yawl with a hat and jacket in it. Wal, we got the things, and they was all identified as belongin' to Ike and two of the boys that sailed with him. So we didn't search no longer. We had to conclude that the vessel and all her crew had gone down in that storm."

"It must have been a terrible blow to you all."

"'Twas. I hain't been the same man since. But my wife and I 'most forgot our own grief, tryin' to console some of the other parents, 'cause one or two of 'em was widders and took it to heart dreadful."

"I see there is a sail over the headland yonder. Isn't that vessel coming in here, captain?"

"Yes, she seems to be headin' this way; I've been lookin' at her. I used to watch for Ike when he was expected, and I always caught sight of his riggin' jest about where that vessel is now. To be watchin' for our children when they're out makin' a venture as he was, is one of the fundamentals of our natur', you know, Mr. Henderson."

"That vessel is a schooner, isn't it?"

"Yes, and she's enough like Ike's to be his'n. Now she's roundin' the p'int. Wal, I vum! If that ain't—but of course it couldn't be him! A year ago I'd have bet my vessel ag'in a peck of potatoes that that was my boy comin' over yonder. That schooner looks as though she might have been modeled after his'n. I wonder whose 'tis!"

"She seems to be headin' for the harbor."

"She is, sure's a March blow! And the man at her helm knows these waters. She's comin' in bold! Ike knowed every inch of this ground. Do ye see that skirt of woods over there to the right, with a big rock at the west end of 'em?"

"Yes."

"Wal, sir, you can run right up within a rod of that shore and have ten foot of water under your keel, so you can come in 'most any time on a single tack. I've seen vessels take half a dozen tacks to get in—afraid, you see, to run so close."

Saying this, the captain rose hastily and walked toward the pier, followed by Mr. Henderson.

"Now," he said, as they approached the wharf, "if that skipper knows what he's about he'll bring her 'round in a minute, 'cause if he lets her swing three red rod beyond that rock he'll touch bottom. There she is! Don't she come



'round beautiful, though! Now Ike used to lower his fores'l and jib, right at that p'int, unless it was calm. I yum! He's a-doin' on't!"

"There's a crowd on the vessel—some excursion, do you think, captain?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Heigho! It makes me feel solemn, that does. It makes me think of them lively chaps that went out with Ike that day. A jollier lot I've never seen, anywhere. But these people are all dressed up in uniform, ain't they?"

"They seem to be. They belong to some school, I suppose."

"I shouldn't wonder. But I'd like to know who's handlin' that vessel. That's what bothers me."

The two stood intently watching the schooner as she swept gracefully towards them, heading evidently for the wharf. Isaac now lowered his mainsail and let the vessel drift slowly in. She had no sooner touched the pier than, throwing off a cable, he sprang ashore, and calling to the boys to haul in the slack, threw the loop over a post and ran to meet his father.

The old man was almost bewildered with astonishment and sudden joy.

"Wal, wal! It ain't you, is it, Ike? It can't be! But 'tis! Ha, ha, ho! What'll your mother say? Ha, ha, ho!"

The tears ran down the old captain's cheeks as he said this, holding Isaac's hands and looking affectionately into his face. He stood laughing and weeping alternately for several minutes, unable to control his feelings. Then he hugged his boy and kissed him again and again, bursting out into a hearty laugh, and in another instant crying like a child.

Meanwhile the others stood at a respectful distance, their eyes filling with tears of sympathy, and at the thought of what was in store for themselves.

The captain finally turned from Isaac and advanced to meet them.

"How are you, Captain Wilkins?" they all cried, running up and shaking him by the hand.

"Ha, ha! So it's you, is it?" he said. "I see 'tis. I recognize you all now; but you look as brown as a lot of Injuns, and you're dressed up like 'em, too! Where did you get all them sheepskin clothes? And Mr. Duncan, too! Your folks won't recognize ye with that brown face and them scraggly whiskers! Ha, ha, ho! Why, you all look like the pictur's of Eskimos I've seen! Where in the world have ye been?—huntin' for the North Pole?"

"It's a long story, father," replied Isaac, "and we'll tell it to you after awhile. We'll have to get unloaded now, the first thing; and then these young men want to get to a telegraph office as quick as they can."

"Wal, your folks 'll be glad to hear from ye ag'in and know you're all safe and sound. Why, we all thought you was in the bottom of Lake Michigan. Your folks all come here and we hunted and hunted for ye, and then they went home and put on mournin'." And the old man began to cry and laugh again, as he had done before.

The rest of our story is quickly told. The boys sent telegrams to friends, asking them to break the news of their happy return to their parents, and adding a request for money to purchase clothing suitable for the homeward journey.

Richard followed his telegram in person, hiring a team and taking Willie and several of the others with him. The rest remained with Captain Wilkins, who offered them the hospitality of his cottage until they could hear from home.

Before they separated they agreed upon a day for a reunion the following summer, a part of the program to be a short cruise in the "Venture." This reunion proved to be the first of a series of similar annual gatherings; and the boys always regard their circle incomplete unless Isaac, Niconimo, Patrick and Felix are present to take part in their pleasure.

Felix was given into the care of Willie, whose home was near to Richard's, until the wishes of his real owners—the family of his late master—could be ascertained. In due time Duncan received a letter, thanking him most kindly for his kindness, and expressing the wish that Willie should keep the dog. So Felix is always on hand to share the enjoyments of the annual gathering.

To the surprise of all, Niconimo declined the offer to send him back to his own people, and expressed a desire to go to school!

"Like him read better now," he explained. "Go school, get ed'cation, then go teach Injun boy. Ha, that good, eh?"

A place was accordingly found for him in one of the government Indian schools, where he greatly improved, and then determined to return to his people as a missionary.

Pat continues in the service of Isaac, and he and the young Indian are as good friends as ever.

"Arrah, Economy!" he said confidentially at one of their meetings, "it's as I was tellin' ye, me b'y. Education is more then r'adin', it is. And it's findin' it out ye are now. Ye're improvin', too, and it's meself is glad to see it. But ye should be goin' to Ould Ireland to put on the finishin' touches. It's there ye'll be gettin' the correct pronunciation,—mind that! Go to the same school where I comploted me education, and then it's fine thrim ye'll be in to be trainin' thim h'athens where ye cam' from!"

# THE NIGHT OF THE STORM.

By MARION BRIER.

"RUN and get me the lantern, Fred. It'll be late before we get back, and we may need it." Mr Keith stopped the horses half way to the gate and waited while Fred ran into the house after the lantern and brought it out to the buggy. "Now you want to commence the milking in plenty of time to-night; it'll take you two boys quite a while to do it all," he continued as he stowed the lantern away in the bottom of the buggy beside the big jar of butter.

"And don't forget that the pie I made for your dinner is under the pan on the second shelf," Mrs. Keith added, smiling down into the manly faces.

"We won't forget; trust us for that, mother," Fred laughed. "We'll remember about the pie, if we don't remember anything else."

Mr. Keith shook the reins, and he and his wife drove off for a day's visit at the old home, leaving the boys to look after the house and to do the chores.

There were a few rows of potatoes to be hoed, and the boys worked busily at them until noon. There was nothing especial to be done after that until chore-time; so after eating their dinner they spent the afternoon by the river, fishing.

They did not have very good success, however, and their string of fish was short when they at last started for home late in the afternoon.

"My, but it's hot!" Will complained as they plodded along the dusty road. "There isn't a breath of air."

Fred cast a critical glance around the horizon. "Shouldn't wonder if we get a storm before morning," he said. "I hope the folks'll get home before it gets here, though."

The atmosphere continued to grow more and more oppressive, and by the time the boys had finished the milking and had eaten their supper, they decided that it was too hot to stay indoors, so they threw themselves down on the grass in the yard and lay there talking until after dark. At last Fred raised himself on his elbow and looked around. "Look at that black cloud over in the west!" he exclaimed. "The folks will get wet before they get home, all right."

The dark cloud advanced up over the sky steadily and rapidly. There were sharp

flashes of lightning and a distant roll of thunder. But the boys paid little attention to it at first, except to express regret that their father and mother were likely to be caught in the rain.

It was only a few minutes, however, before they knew, by the way in which the thunder followed close after the lightning, that the storm was approaching rapidly. Nevertheless they were astonished, when they looked about, to see how suddenly the great cloud had rolled up over them. Fred sprang up, exclaiming, "There's wind in that cloud; just see how it's coming! We'd better go in and shut the windows."

The boys were scarcely inside the house before the storm broke furiously. They hastily pulled down the windows without stopping for a light, and then stood there in the dark room looking out at the wild storm, awed and frightened. The lightning was almost continuous, and in its glare they could see the trees whipping back and forth and bending their tops almost to the ground. For an instant everything would be blotted out in a black darkness that was filled only with the roar of the storm. Then the next moment everything would stand out distinctly in the weird, uncertain light. They could feel the house tremble and quiver, and once a tall tree that stood in the yard came crashing down, falling just short of the window where they stood.

A moment later Will shrieked with excitement, "The barn! The barn's going!" They watched it breathlessly. There in the bright glare of the lightning the roof seemed to move up and down as if getting ready to fly, then it rose and sailed off like some great bird. At the same time a huge black, unwieldy object rolled and bounced wildly by the window. Will involuntarily shut his eyes as he saw it coming, and then just as quickly opened them again. But the dark object had gone by. He caught a last glimpse of it as it went down the yard, and saw that it was the corn-crib. An instant later a loose board came crashing through the window, and the boys quickly retreated. There was a quick patter of hailstones on the roof and the sharp breaking of glass, and then the storm seemed to have passed by, and in a few moments the thunder and lightning almost ceased, although the rain still poured down.

The boys hastened to strike a light and to stuff the broken windows with old clothing, for the wind and rain were driving in fiercely.

"I wish the lantern was here," Fred said presently. "We ought to go out and see if the stock are all right; but you couldn't see your hand before your face, it's so dark."

Suddenly Will sprang to his feet, his eyes wide and terrified, his face growing white. "Fred!" he exclaimed in a tone of horror, "I saw a tree fall across the railroad track! There were so many things going on all at once, I never thought of it again until this minute!"

"You did!" Fred's face grew as white as Will's. The railroad crossed their farm about thirty rods from the house, just beyond a little ravine. On the other side of the track and directly opposite the house, was a fine old elm tree. It was this noble tree that Will had seen as it fell across the track; but in the excitement of the moment he had not thought of the terrible danger it would be to the oncoming train. Now it suddenly flashed through his mind.

The two boys stood looking at each other steadily and silently for a moment. What could they do? There was no lantern with which to signal the train. Will glanced at the clock. "It'll be time for the passenger in half an hour," he said. His voice shook and he looked helplessly at Fred.

Fred went to the wood-box, snatched up a handful of newspapers and buttoned them inside of his coat, then hastily stored away a handful of matches in his trousers pocket.

"Come on," he said. "We've got to do something. We can't just stay here, lantern or no lantern." He dashed out of the door, with Will close behind.

Although the worst of the storm was over, it was still raining hard and the wind was blowing in fierce gusts. The lightning had ceased and it was intensely dark. After looking about for an instant, Fred returned to the house and set the lamp in the window, but even then it did not throw its light very far through the rain.

The boys quickly covered the first twenty rods, but their trouble began when they reached the long grass and the underbrush that bordered the ravine. They could see absolutely nothing there, and it was hard to tell in what direction they were going. They were drenched with the rain, and the wind had turned so cold since the hail that it chilled them through and through. Suddenly they splashed into running water.

Will stopped in dismay. "Where in the world are we?" he exclaimed. "Can't you strike a match, Fred? I haven't any idea where I am or which way to go."

But Fred would not risk getting the matches wet. "We're all right," he insisted. "The ravine is filled up with water, that's all. There isn't any place to strike a match," he added. "We'll have to find our way in the dark. We can't miss the track very well when we get out of here, and when we once get on to it we can easily follow till we find the tree."

So they plunged on, through the water and up the farther bank, scratching their hands and faces on the thorn bushes, and tearing their clothes; but at last they stumbled on to the track, and guided by the rails, hastened forward

until they ran into the great tree stretched across it. Even though they expected to find it there, it gave them a shock as they felt the great trunk on the track and imagined the train with its scores of passengers dashing into it.

"Strike a match, Fred, do!" Will insisted excitedly. "You've got a whole pocketful."

Fred turned with his back to the storm, and taking a match from his pocket, carefully sheltered it while he tried to strike it on the under curve of the rail. It would not light. He tried another and another with no better results. "It's no use," he said at last. "They're all wet, and these papers are all soaked through too. I'll have to go back and get some more. You stay here and whistle every little while, when it's time for me to leave the house on the way back here, so I can find you easier," he commanded. Then he was gone.

He ran along the track, finally stumbling down the slippery bank in a kind of blind terror. He had no idea how long it had been since they left the house; it might be time for the train now. Already, in imagination, he saw the cars being hurled down the bank and heard the cries and groans of the injured. He rushed on, stumbling, falling, bruised and scratched, but scarcely knowing it. "Oh, Father, make the train late. Don't let it come before I get back," he whispered over and over.

He burst into the house and looked at the clock. It was five minutes to train time! There was not a second to lose. He seized the box of matches and another bundle of papers and quickly rolled them up in the oilcloth off the kitchen table. Then he caught up an umbrella, thrust it under his arm with the roll of oilcloth, and darted out into the storm again, giving a shrill whistle as he did so.

Will's answering whistle, repeated at short intervals, guided him, and he made quick time back to the track. There was no sound of the train yet, and he drew a quick breath of relief.

He opened the umbrella and told Will to hold it. Then carefully shielding his package, he opened it and struck one of the matches on the strip of sandpaper on the matchbox. The wind blew it out as quickly as it was lighted, but he had better success with the next one and succeeded in lighting one of the papers. He held the blazing torch up under shelter of the umbrella, and by its light he could see the monster tree lying across the track. It was useless for them to try to move it. Then the light went out and they were in darkness again.

Fred rolled the precious bundle up carefully once more, and then taking the umbrella from Will, he held it over the package. It was hard work, for the wind still blew fiercely and tugged and strained at the umbrella, almost wrenching it from his hands; but he was determined that his matches and papers should not get wet this time. "You see," he explained to Will, "as soon as we hear the train we will light first one paper and then another and swing them. That's the only way we can flag the train without a lantern."

The minutes went by and still there was no sign of the train. The boys were shivering, standing there in the keen wind in their wet clothes, and Fred's arm ached cruelly, trying to hold the umbrella steady against the fierce gusts.

Every few minutes Will put his ear to the rail and listened, but there was no sound of the train. It seemed to Fred that the umbrella would be jerked from his tired hands in spite of him, but he set his lips in a stern line and held on grimly. He must not let go. The slow minutes dragged on and still there was no sign of the train. It seemed to the boys that they had been there for hours. At last they carefully unrolled the bundle again and lighted another match so that they could look at Fred's watch. It was ten minutes to ten o'clock! An hour and a quarter past train time!

"Perhaps they've got word some way and aren't coming through," Will suggested doubtfully.

But Fred shook his head. "It isn't likely," he said. "Anyway we don't know, so we will have to stay here."

Then followed another long, weary period of waiting and watching there in the darkness and cold. It seemed to Fred that he could not hold the straining umbrella another second when at last Will, with his ear to the rail, declared that he heard a faint rumble.

The boys were intensely excited at once. "Here," Fred exclaimed, "you hold the umbrella and I'll get everything ready."

Will tried to take it; but Fred's hands were numb, and somehow during the change from one to the other, the wind wrenched it from them, and as they made a wild grab for it they dropped the oilcloth too and the wind whisked it away. The boys groped blindly for it through the mud. They found it presently, but to their horror it had unrolled and both papers and matches lay in a puddle of water, soaked through.

Far up the track the distant rumble of the train grew more distinct.

Fred felt himself growing faint with horror; but it was only for a second. Then he darted up the track as fast as he could run toward the oncoming train. On, on he went, stumbling, falling, but still on. Once he missed his footing in the dark and fell into a culvert, spraining his ankle; but he never stopped.

Nearer and nearer came the humming sound, and then suddenly the great headlight burst into view. Fred tore off his coat and began to wave it frantically. The light was shining full upon him now, and the great iron monster seemed to be rushing down upon him. Still he kept his place there in the middle of the track, waving his coat wildly and shouting himself hoarse. Would they see him in time, or would they—

The thought was left unfinished, for at last he heard the shrill whistle for down brakes.

Fred sprang off the track and went rolling down the bank just as the great train thundered by, and then for the first time in his life he fainted.

When he opened his eyes a few minutes later he found himself surrounded by an excited group of trainmen and passengers. He felt a good deal dazed, but managed to tell them of the tree across the track. The conductor gave orders to start the train and to proceed slowly and cautiously until they reached the obstruction. Fred could not stand on his sprained foot, so they lifted him carefully into one of the cars and established him comfortably among the cushions, where he was quickly surrounded by a group of grateful passengers who insisted on hearing a full account of his night's watch.

He had hardly commenced to answer their questions, however, when the train came to a stop again and the trainmen went ahead with lanterns and axes to clear away the obstruction.

Fred was wondering how he was going to get home again, for he could not bear his weight on his foot, and it was painful him dreadfully, when the door opened and the conductor came in, followed by Fred's father.

"Here the young man is, and I tell you, he is a boy to be proud of," the conductor exclaimed heartily as he led the way to the seat where Fred lay back among the cushions. "It makes me shake to think of where we would all be if it hadn't been for him," he added. "You see that little rise of ground would have kept us from seeing the tree till we were almost on to it, and nothing could have saved us then. This boy has saved us from a bad wreck, and the company will not forget him."

There was a look in his father's eyes as he lifted his boy in his arms that made Fred happier than the thought of anything that the company might do for him.

His father carried him home in his arms, with Will stumbling along beside them. There they found their mother anxiously watching for them.

Their father and mother had reached home just before the arrival of the train, and had been much alarmed at not finding the boys there. Their father had at once started out to search for them, while their mother in her fear for their safety got everything ready in case that they had met with an accident in the storm; and so Fred's foot was quickly bandaged and everything was done to lessen the pain. How good it seemed to be safe at home again, with his mother's hand stroking his hair and a glad light shining in her eyes when she looked at him!

Half an hour later he heard the whistle of the train as it passed the house, and he drew a long, happy breath to think that all the people on it were going on their way safely. "Oh, I'm so glad Will saw that tree fall!" he thought gratefully.



can's shop and spent hours in some secret occupation. Sometimes Duncan was with them, and finally Isaac was admitted to their meetings. They always barricaded the door and steadily refused to reveal what took place. The others were constantly on the *qui vive* to find out the mystery, but it was well kept, and none of them ever suspected what was going on. This lasted ten days, and then the secret meetings suddenly ceased.

Soon afterwards there came a great thaw lasting two days. The melting snow ran in rivulets around the house, and the high banks in front began to sink in great sloughing masses, rendering all outdoor sports very disagreeable.

In the afternoon of the second day the mercury fell, and at bedtime the weather was intensely cold.

On the following morning the boys were awakened by the mutterings of Pat, who had risen early to start his fires. He was poking the embers in the fireplace and soliloquizing in the following strain:

"Arrah! So it's out, is the secret, at last! But it's better I was thinkin' of the literary capacities of thim b'ys, I was indade. Av it was aquil to their appetites, it's not the way bit notice yonder yez would see, but a volume as big as the house. Tin days of labor wid mystery and barricadin' of doors for the loikes of that bit o' writin'! It's the corn male that's befuddled their brains—the undistilled whisky that's in it, and they take it in such enormous quantities! It's a wonder their jaws doesn't ache wid rheumatism! Av it was cookin' the whole crop I was, crib and all, it's niver a breath they would draw till the last drap had vanished and shtrangulation had inded their days! Tin days wasted writin' a way bit piece o' printin' no bigger than the crown of me hat—av there was a crown in it, bad luck to me poverty!"

"Pat, what do you find to grumble about this bright morning?" called Ransom from his bed.

"Grumble, is it? It's grumble you would yourself, I'm thinkin', Misther Shtorey, av ye had to make a fire wid all the coals quinchd out wid the cowlid."

"No; but you were talking about a piece of printing, or something. What is it?"

"The way bit yonder is it ye mane? Indade, it's the worruk of Misther Frank and thim, and a sorra showin' it is after tin days of mystery and labor under lock and kay."

This conversation awoke others, and in a few moments half a dozen pairs of eyes were curiously reading what Frank and Will had posted in a conspicuous place the night before. It was printed with a pen in large letters on a piece of birch bark, and read as follows:

"The pleasure of your company is requested at Great Bay, Thursday, December the fourteenth, between the hours of eight a. m. and ten p. m., to participate in an entertainment provided at great labor and expense by certain benevolent individuals interested in the welfare of the young. A number of wild animals will

be on exhibition, whose playful antics are expected to contribute greatly to the amusement of the guests."

This notice caused a great deal of merry comment. All thought it had something to do with the mystery of Duncan's shop, and naturally their curiosity was greatly excited.

Duncan smiled but said nothing. Isaac pretended not to notice anything that was going on. Will Staples and Frank Burton strove to look very serious, but the twitching of the corners of their mouths showed that a mighty struggle was going on within.

At the breakfast table, amid the buzz of excited conversation, Duncan remarked, laughingly:

"Your surmises are all wrong, boys. Not one of you has guessed the secret; but now I am going to tell you what I propose to do. There is excellent skating on the bay, and I am going to try it after breakfast."

So saying, he reached under his seat and pulled out a clumsy pair of skates.

"I advise you all," he added, "to take a peep under your seats. Perhaps Santa Claus has remembered you also, in anticipation of Christmas."

Underneath the long seats that stood permanently around the table, Pat had ingeniously contrived some broad shelves which he used as receptacles for various articles belonging to the table. There Will and Frank had concealed the skates. The boys drew them out and for a moment sat in silent surprise. Then Carl found his tongue.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" he cried. "Three cheers for the skates and the skate makers!" And in spite of mouths full of corncake and potato the cheers were given with a will.

"How did you fellows manage to make them?" asked Henry when quiet was restored.

"It was a very simple operation," replied Duncan. "We cut off some pieces of strap iron, and after rounding up one end in the shape of a runner, welded on some cross-pieces and punched holes in them for fastening on the woods. I did the welding, but the others made the woods and riveted them on. I think they have done the work remarkably well. Now you must contrive some way to tie them on to your feet, yourselves."

"Well," said Sam, "there is one thing I would like to know. Where are the wild animals, whose antics were to contribute to our amusement?"

"You'll see!" answered Frank.

The boys were wild with excitement and left their breakfast half eaten to hunt for straps and strings, and then rushed pellmell down to the bay to try their new skates.

Frank and Sam followed together, and Frank asked:

"Do you see where the wild animals come in now, Sam?"

"Ha, yes; but I think you fellows were long-headed to anticipate it."

"Not a bit. We felt sure there would be







tomed to going with the boys.

In a short time they perceived that they were walking on rising ground, which led them to believe they were approaching the high spring. They soon came to some small birches that had been stripped of their bark, and Isaac said the trees had certainly been stripped that very day, for their surfaces were fresh and clean.

"If that's the case," said Henry, "we must be on their track, for this is where they started from to go home."

"Yes," answered Frank; "and now the question is, where they wandered to when they started. Fire another shot, Buster; perhaps they'll hear it."

Henry did so, and after listening in vain for some response they decided to begin a search of the woods. They called to Felix, but no Felix responded. They whistled and called again and again, but the dog paid no attention to their summons if, indeed, he heard them at all.

They stood a long time deliberating in great perplexity and repeating their calls, but eliciting no response from any direction. What could they do? They dared not proceed alone for fear of losing their way, and yet they felt they must not be idle. They began to fear for their own safety, for if they moved out of their footsteps they were liable to lose their bearings.

While they were thus deliberating what to do in their dilemma, supposing that Felix had deserted them and left them to their fate, they caught the sound of his deep voice in the far distance. It was scarcely audible, but they all recognized it instantly, and it filled them with hope and joy.

"There!" cried Duncan; "I believe he has found them. How unjust we have been to that noble fellow! He has been searching the woods while we stood here blaming him for deserting us. Listen!"

The barking continued, and, guided by the sound, they started in the direction indicated, pressing on as rapidly as they could.

When they reached the spot they found the dog standing with his back towards them, his feet wide apart and his head lowered, as though gazing at some object buried in the snow. He gave a quick glance at them as they approached, ceased barking and retreated from his position.

Duncan stepped forward and looked carefully for some signs of human presence, but he could see nothing. All was blank before his eyes. He was about to advance to make a closer investigation when a voice, coming apparently from some deep cavern, warned him not to approach too near. For an instant he was startled, expecting to see a great gulf open at his feet. He stopped short and shouted:

"Richard! Marshall!"

"Halloo!" came up from the depth in the same distant voice.

"Is that Richard speaking?" asked Duncan.

"Yes; and Marsh is here too."

"Where are you?"

"Down here—under the cliff!"

All retreated a step instinctively. They had unconsciously approached the cliff, and now

stood upon the very edge of its dizzy height!

"How did you fellows happen to get over the cliff?" shouted Henry.

"We don't know—only we tumbled over. We started to go home and landed here; that's all we know about it."

"Are you hurt?" asked Duncan.

"Marsh hurt his hand and I bruised my knee a little."

"Why didn't you walk around under the bluff?" asked Henry. "You could get up, you know, about half a mile further on."

"How do you know that?" asked Marshall. "We don't know what part of the cliff this is. But if we did it wouldn't do us any good, for we can't get out of this hole. The snow is about ten feet above our heads. When we fell we broke the crust and found ourselves buried up, but we've been treading the snow and have a breathing place now."

"How long have you been there?" asked Isaac.

"Four or five hours. We started for home at twelve—seems like a week," responded Richard.

"My! but we were glad to hear Felix barking!" cried Marshall. "We never expected to get out of this place. Can you get us up?"

"We'll try to find some way," replied Frank; "but you'll have to 'be aisy' awhile till we study out the problem."

"All right!" cried Richard; "but study hard, for we're getting awful tired of this position."

Henry suggested that they might be reached with a pole, but Isaac said that would be impossible.

"That cliff is fifty feet high if it's a foot," he declared. "Judging by the distance we came from them birches, which couldn't be far from the high spring, we must be about half a mile west of the pool; and if so, this is a high cliff and falls off very abrupt."

"If it hadn't been for the snow," remarked Frank, "they would never have lived to tell what happened."

"Of course," replied Isaac; "but these north winds have been piling the snow against the rocks there all winter, and that's what's saved their lives. But they must be thirty feet from the top of this cliff, at the least calculation, and we couldn't never get them up with a pole."

"Then we must have a rope," said Duncan.

"That's what we must have—a rope, sure," answered Isaac. "Now, Mr. Duncan, Felix will mind you better than any of the rest of us, for you've been giving him his orders to-day. I expect he'll take you to the falls and back in the course of an hour or so, if you've a mind to go. It's a good mile, but you'll know where you're going and won't have to stop for anything. You'll find the rope we want hanging up over my bench. I think you'd better take one of the boys with you; and I'd like to have one of 'em stay with me, for we'll have to feel around here and fix a sort of railing against some of these trees. It ain't going to be any easy job to pull them boys up without a support."

"Very well," answered Duncan. "Now, who will go with me?"

"I will," replied Henry.

"Then we'll be off. Come, Felix, lead the way. Go home!"

Felix understood the command and started instantly. The wind was now blowing from the northwest and seemed to be rapidly increasing in violence. They had not proceeded far before Duncan became convinced that the storm was growing into a blizzard, and he strove to make all possible speed. The snow was still falling rapidly and drifting in every direction. In places they had to wallow nearly to their waists, and once the dog had to be lifted out of a drift into which he had plunged; but he never lost his bearings, although it was quite dark long before they reached the house.

Meanwhile Isaac and Frank had a very difficult task before them. It was fast growing dark, and soon they found they could see absolutely nothing. They were scarcely able to distinguish the trees they were standing under, and they had to work on the verge of a precipice fifty feet high!

The first thing to be done was to find two trees growing at the very edge, against which they could roll a log to serve as a guard and support.

"It would be impossible," explained Isaac, "to draw them boys up without a log or something for the rope to slide over; at least, I wouldn't want to risk it."

"Why?" asked Frank.

"Because we can't stand at the edge without any purchase, you see; and besides, the rope would cut through and strike the rock, and them rocks are mighty sharp. It would cut the rope in two."

"Yes, I see. Well, what shall we do?"

"Well, in the first place, we'll have to find some trees right at the edge. Get down on your knees and crawl out towards the edge and feel for the butt of a tree. I presume there are plenty of 'em, but we want one as close as possible. I'll do the same here; but wait! I must cut a hole, first. I'll see if I can find a young sapling. I want to tie the pole to the trees a couple of feet above the ground to be a sort of safeguard and railing while we work."

"We'll have to be mighty careful and not let the log go over the cliff."

"Yes, indeed; it would crush them fellows if it should happen to hit 'em. Now don't move a peg from where you are, Frank. Stand as still as a post till I bring the pole."

Isaac then moved carefully away, feeling about among the trees until he found a small one that suited him. This he cut and trimmed with his hatchet, working under the greatest difficulty, for he had to be guided entirely by the sense of feeling. Then he called to Frank to get his bearings and crept cautiously back to his former position.

"Now," he asked, "are you ready?"

"Yes; I haven't moved an inch."

"All right. Now reach out this way and get hold of this pole. There! Have you got it?"

"Yes."

"Now have you got something you can tie the pole with—a watch cord or a necktie?"

"Yes; my watch cord—a strip of otter skin."

They crawled forward, pushing the pole before them and feeling their way with the greatest caution, until their hands found the edge of the cliff. But they could find no trees. They felt all along the edge in vain for some stunted tree or rocky projection, against which they could safely place a log.

"Well," said Isaac at last, "that rather stumps me. I felt sure we should find half a dozen of 'em."

"What can we do?"

"I don't know. I'll have to think awhile."

"What's the matter up there?" cried Richard from the depths.

"Oh, nothing very serious, I guess," replied Frank, "only we were looking for some trees that we don't happen to find. We'll be all right after awhile. You rest easy. 'If ye can't be aisy, be as aisy as ye can!' Are you cold?"

"Only our hands and feet; but Marsh's hand pains him badly, and it seems to be bleeding terribly, though it's as dark as a pocket here, and we can't see anything. Be as quick as you can!"

"All right! Duncan has gone for a rope, and when he gets back we'll be ready. How's your knee?"

"It aches a little, but I don't mind that much."

"You have one advantage, Dick—you don't feel the wind. It's blowing a hurricane up here."

"No; but we'll stand the hurricane if you'll hurry up and find some way to get us out of this!"

"Now," said Isaac to Frank, "I think I know how we can fix it. I'll cut down a large tree and chop a groove in one end for the rope to run in. Then we'll shove it out endways over the edge. What do you think of that idea?"

"I should think it would work, if we can prevent the log from going over the cliff."

"It won't do that after the rope is in place. Well, I can leave a few branches on it to make it more solid."

After placing the pole in an upright position to enable them to find the place again, they stepped back a few paces and began to search for a suitable tree. In the course of half an hour Isaac had one felled and trimmed, a few branches being left to give it greater stability as it rested on the ground.

They then attempted to move it forward to the edge of the cliff, but the branches prevented its rolling, and they found their united strength unequal to the task of dragging it over the ground.

As they sat waiting for Duncan—for they could do nothing more until he returned—they keenly felt the piercing wind, which now blew a gale, and their hands and feet ached with the biting cold. They were compelled to bestir themselves to keep from being frost-bitten.

At last the murmur of approaching voices greeted their ears, and then the glimmer of a light suddenly appeared in their midst. Duncan had brought a lantern; and he had also taken the precaution to tie a cord to Felix's collar, for the intense darkness rendered it very difficult to follow his leading. Ransom, Will and Sam also accompanied him. With this addition to their force Isaac and Frank had no further difficulty.

The lantern was tied to the pole, and its bright beams were found to be a very great assistance. The tree was soon in its place. Then



"That vessel is a schooner. Isn't it?"—Page 91.

the rope was lowered with a noose made in the end, and Marshall was safely drawn up the cliff. The rope was again lowered for Richard, but when the boys began to pull it came up so easily that they thought it was empty and lowered it again. Richard called to them from the bottom of the well:

"Pull ahead! That's our birch bark. I don't propose to lose that after all this trouble."

The bark was accordingly drawn up, and

afterwards Richard himself was safely landed on the bluff.

"Well, Dick, I must say you're a plucky fellow," said Will. "It's precious little I'd have thought about the bark, after getting into such a scrape as that."

"It went down with us; and it's what we came for, isn't it?"

"Of course. But how did it happen, Dick?"

"How did we happen to go over the cliff? Well, we started for home—and I am dead sure we started right—and when we were 'most to the great rock, as we supposed, down went Marsh out of sight, and before I had a chance to recover myself, I was floundering in the deep snow close beside him."

"You were just a trifle surprised, I suppose!" remarked Frank.

"Surprised! Well, I shouldn't have been more so if we had suddenly landed in Africa," Richard responded; "and it was a long time before we began to understand what had happened. I would have wagered a farm against your hat that in ten minutes more we would have reached the great rock."

All hands now started for home, where they arrived after a tedious and laborious walk of an hour.

Felix dropped as soon as he entered the house and lay for a long time panting, as though completely exhausted. But he was the hero of the day. The boys lavished upon him the most devoted and affectionate attentions, and brought him some of the choicest morsels from the table.

Pat had a good supper and roaring fire ready for their enjoyment. The warm atmosphere soon developed a few frozen ears and noses, but otherwise those exposed to the severity of the blizzard suffered no serious consequences.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

**S**PRING came at last, and with it very busy times in our little community. Isaac had built a small boat during the winter, which he placed on the creek as soon as it was free from ice. Meanwhile the keel of the vessel was laid, and from that time the work of construction was vigorously pushed.

Sam followed the workmen with his paint brush, so that when the schooner was ready to launch, her hull had received a heavy coat of white paint which gave her a handsome appearance.

The launching, which took place one Saturday in the latter part of May, was a great occasion and filled the boys with unbounded enthusiasm. Isaac had made his preparations very carefully. His "ways" of heavy plank, laid lengthwise under the bilges of the vessel and extending into the water, and his "cradle" of smooth timbers resting upon them, had been the work of many days, so anxious was he that everything should be in perfect order to insure a successful launch.

Then the resources of the little community

were taxed to the utmost to find sufficient grease to besmear the under sides of the timbers, which were to slide upon the "ways" and fall from the vessel as she glided into the water. This, however, was finally accomplished, as the calking had been done, by the ingenuity of Isaac, assisted by Ransom's ready information.

When everything was ready Carl and Sam at a signal from Isaac knocked the "dogshores" away, and the vessel slid down easily, stern foremost, into the water. Cheer after cheer went up from her deck as she floated slowly and gracefully away from the bank. Isaac then threw out his anchor, and the "Venture," rebuilt after so many months of toil and difficulty, rode safely in the bay awaiting her full equipment.

Sunday, the tenth of June, was the last day spent on the island. It was with mingled feelings of joy and sadness that the boys took part that memorable morning in the last service to be held together. When it was over they removed to the schooner, where all their stores, excepting their bedding, had been carried the day before. That night they were to sleep in the cabin of the vessel.

At daybreak the following morning Isaac was on deck, anxiously scanning the horizon for signs of the weather. Everything was clear and promising, and he began his preparations to sail. First, taking Carl and Richard with him, he went out in a small boat with a sounding-line to find a channel into the deep water of the lake. The task was soon accomplished, and about eight o'clock the boys weighed anchor and began the homeward voyage.

On the following Thursday afternoon old Captain Wilkins sat on his doorstep talking with a friend. His hair had grown rapidly gray during the past year, and he seemed to have lost much of the stalwart vigor that had characterized him in former days.

"I sort o' dread a long voyage lately, Mr. Henderson," he was saying. "It didn't use to be so, but since I lost my boy it's been different. That broke me up wonderful. It was unexpected, you see, and he must have been dead three weeks or more before I had the least idea of it."

"How did it happen?"

"Wal, you see, the fact is, I don't exactly know myself. He started to take a crowd of young fellows to Chicago to the World's Fair, and I s'pose was struck by the big storm that passed over these lakes a year ago. It must have struck him the second day after he sailed. There was several vessels lost, but they was all heard from but his'n. We never could get no trace of the vessel, and I s'pose he must have gone down in deep water, for if the schooner had been drove ashore she'd have been found. Ah, well! Ike was a likely boy and a good sailor. He must have been struck abeam, and it must have been awful sudden."

"Was nothing ever found?"

"Wal, yes, we did find his yawl, but we couldn't get no further trace. You see, they'd

been gone nigh about three weeks when I begun to get letters from the parents of the boys—and they was a lively lot of youngsters, I can tell ye—sayin' they hadn't heard anything from 'em, and wantin' to know if I knew what had become of 'em. That set me to thinkin' serious, though I didn't feel uneasy till we found out that the boys hadn't been to Chicago at all. Then their folks all come here and we started a thorough and systematic search, and kept it up for three weeks. After awhile a sloop sailed in here from somewhere up on the Georgian Bay, and the captain, hearin' about the case, reported that the day after the storm he picked up a yawl with a hat and jacket in it. Wal, we got the things, and they was all identified as belongin' to Ike and two of the boys that sailed with him. So we didn't search no longer. We had to conclude that the vessel and all her crew had gone down in that storm."

"It must have been a terrible blow to you all."

"'Twas. I hain't been the same man since. But my wife and I 'most forgot our own grief, tryin' to console some of the other parents, 'cause one or two of 'em was widders and took it to heart dreadful."

"I see there is a sail over the headland yonder. Isn't that vessel coming in here, captain?"

"Yes, she seems to be headin' this way; I've been lookin' at her. I used to watch for Ike when he was expected, and I always caught sight of his riggin' jest about where that vessel is now. To be watchin' for our children when they're out makin' a venture as he was, is one of the fundamentals of our natur', you know, Mr. Henderson."

"That vessel is a schooner, isn't it?"

"Yes, and she's enough like Ike's to be his'n. Now she's roundin' the pint. Wal, I vum! If that ain't—but of course it couldn't be him! A year ago I'd have bet my vessel ag'in a peck of potatoes that that was my boy comin' over yonder. That schooner looks as though she might have been modeled after his'n. I wonder whose 'tis!"

"She seems to be headin' for the harbor."

"She is, sure's a March blow! And the man at her helm knows these waters. She's comin' in bold! Ike knowed every inch of this ground. Do ye see that skirt of woods over there to the right, with a big rock at the west end of 'em?"

"Yes."

"Wal, sir, you can run right up within a rod of that shore and have ten foot of water under your keel, so you can come in 'most any time on a single tack. I've seen vessels take half a dozen tacks to get in—afraid, you see, to run so close."

Saying this, the captain rose hastily and walked toward the pier, followed by Mr. Henderson.

"Now," he said, as they approached the wharf, "if that skipper knows what he's about he'll bring her 'round in a minute, 'cause if he lets her swing three rod beyond that rock he'll touch bottom. There she is! Don't she come

'round beautiful, though! Now Ike used to lower his fores'l and jib, right at that p'int, unless it was calm. I vum! He's a-doin' on't!"

"There's a crowd on the vessel—some excursion, do you think, captain?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Heigho! It makes me feel solemn, that does. It makes me think of them lively chaps that went out with Ike that day. A jollier lot I've never seen, anywhere. But these people are all dressed up in uniform, ain't they?"

"They seem to be. They belong to some school, I suppose."

"I shouldn't wonder. But I'd like to know who's handlin' that vessel. That's what bothers me."

The two stood intently watching the schooner as she swept gracefully towards them, heading evidently for the wharf. Isaac now lowered his mainsail and let the vessel drift slowly in. She had no sooner touched the pier than, throwing off a cable, he sprang ashore, and calling to the boys to haul in the slack, threw the loop over a post and ran to meet his father.

The old man was almost bewildered with astonishment and sudden joy.

"Wal, wal! It ain't you, is it, Ike? It can't be! But 'tis! Ha, ha, ho! What'll your mother say? Ha, ha, ho!"

The tears ran down the old captain's cheeks as he said this, holding Isaac's hands and looking affectionately into his face. He stood laughing and weeping alternately for several minutes, unable to control his feelings. Then he hugged his boy and kissed him again and again, bursting out into a hearty laugh, and in another instant crying like a child.

Meanwhile the others stood at a respectful distance, their eyes filling with tears of sympathy, and at the thought of what was in store for themselves.

The captain finally turned from Isaac and advanced to meet them.

"How are you, Captain Wilkins?" they all cried, running up and shaking him by the hand.

"Ha, ha! So it's you, is it?" he said. "I see 'tis. I recognize you all now; but you look as brown as a lot of Injuns, and you're dressed up like 'em, too! Where did you get all them sheepskin clothes? And Mr. Duncan, too! Your folks won't recognize ye with that brown face and them scraggly whiskers! Ha, ha, ho! Why, you all look like the pictur's of Eskimos I've seen! Where in the world have ye been?—huntin' for the North Pole?"

"It's a long story, father," replied Isaac, "and we'll tell it to you after awhile. We'll have to get unloaded now, the first thing; and then these young men want to get to a telegraph office as quick as they can."

"Wal, your folks 'll be glad to hear from ye ag'in and know you're all safe and sound. Why, we all thought you was in the bottom of Lake Michigan. Your folks all come here and we hunted and hunted for ye, and then they went home and put on mournin'." And the old man began to cry and laugh again, as he had done before.

The rest of our story is quickly told. The boys sent telegrams to friends, asking them to break the news of their happy return to their parents, and adding a request for money to purchase clothing suitable for the homeward journey.

Richard followed his telegram in person, hiring a team and taking Willie and several of the others with him. The rest remained with Captain Wilkins, who offered them the hospitality of his cottage until they could hear from home.

Before they separated they agreed upon a day for a reunion the following summer, a part of the program to be a short cruise in the "Venture." This reunion proved to be the first of a series of similar annual gatherings; and the boys always regard their circle incomplete unless Isaac, Niconimo, Patrick and Felix are present to take part in their pleasure.

Felix was given into the care of Willie, whose home was near to Richard's, until the wishes of his real owners—the family of his late master—could be ascertained. In due time Duncan received a letter, thanking him most kindly for his kindness, and expressing the wish that Willie should keep the dog. So Felix is always on hand to share the enjoyments of the annual gathering.

To the surprise of all, Niconimo declined the offer to send him back to his own people, and expressed a desire to go to school!

"Like him read better now," he explained. "Go school, get ed'cation, then go teach Injun boy. Ha, that good, eh?"

A place was accordingly found for him in one of the government Indian schools, where he greatly improved, and then determined to return to his people as a missionary.

Pat continues in the service of Isaac, and he and the young Indian are as good friends as ever.

"Arrah, Economy!" he said confidentially at one of their meetings, "it's as I was tellin' ye, me b'y. Education is more then r'adin', it is. And it's findin' it out ye are now. Ye're improvin', too, and it's meself is glad to see it. But ye should be goin' to Ould Ireland to put on the finishin' touches. It's there ye'll be gettin' the correct pronounciation,—mind that! Go to the same school where I completed me education, and then it's fine thrim ye'll be in to be trainin' thim h'athens where ye cam' from!"

# THE NIGHT OF THE STORM.

*By* MARION BRIER.

"**R**UN and get me the lantern, Fred. It'll be late before we get back, and we may need it." Mr Keith stopped the horses half way to the gate and waited while Fred ran into the house after the lantern and brought it out to the buggy. "Now you want to commence the milking in plenty of time to-night; it'll take you two boys quite a while to do it all," he continued as he stowed the lantern away in the bottom of the buggy beside the big jar of butter.

"And don't forget that the pie I made for your dinner is under the pan on the second shelf," Mrs. Keith added, smiling down into the manly faces.

"We won't forget; trust us for that, mother," Fred laughed. "We'll remember about the pie, if we don't remember anything else."

Mr. Keith shook the reins, and he and his wife drove off for a day's visit at the old home, leaving the boys to look after the house and to do the chores.

There were a few rows of potatoes to be hoed, and the boys worked busily at them until noon. There was nothing especial to be done after that until chore-time; so after eating their dinner they spent the afternoon by the river, fishing.

They did not have very good success, however, and their string of fish was short when they at last started for home late in the afternoon.

"My, but it's hot!" Will complained as they plodded along the dusty road. "There isn't a breath of air."

Fred cast a critical glance around the horizon. "Shouldn't wonder if we get a storm before morning," he said. "I hope the folks'll get home before it gets here, though."

The atmosphere continued to grow more and more oppressive, and by the time the boys had finished the milking and had eaten their supper, they decided that it was too hot to stay indoors, so they threw themselves down on the grass in the yard and lay there talking until after dark. At last Fred raised himself on his elbow and looked around. "Look at that black cloud over in the west!" he exclaimed. "The folks will get wet before they get home, all right."

The dark cloud advanced up over the sky steadily and rapidly. There were sharp

flashes of lightning and a distant roll of thunder. But the boys paid little attention to it at first, except to express regret that their father and mother were likely to be caught in the rain.

It was only a few minutes, however, before they knew, by the way in which the thunder followed close after the lightning, that the storm was approaching rapidly. Nevertheless they were astonished, when they looked about, to see how suddenly the great cloud had rolled up over them. Fred sprang up, exclaiming, "There's wind in that cloud; just see how it's coming! We'd better go in and shut the windows."

The boys were scarcely inside the house before the storm broke furiously. They hastily pulled down the windows without stopping for a light, and then stood there in the dark room looking out at the wild storm, awed and frightened. The lightning was almost continuous, and in its glare they could see the trees whipping back and forth and bending their tops almost to the ground. For an instant everything would be blotted out in a black darkness that was filled only with the roar of the storm. Then the next moment everything would stand out distinctly in the weird, uncertain light. They could feel the house tremble and quiver, and once a tall tree that stood in the yard came crashing down, falling just short of the window where they stood.

A moment later Will shrieked with excitement, "The barn! The barn's going!" They watched it breathlessly. There in the bright glare of the lightning the roof seemed to move up and down as if getting ready to fly, then it rose and sailed off like some great bird. At the same time a huge black, unwieldy object rolled and bounced wildly by the window. Will involuntarily shut his eyes as he saw it coming, and then just as quickly opened them again. But the dark object had gone by. He caught a last glimpse of it as it went down the yard, and saw that it was the corn-crib. An instant later a loose board came crashing through the window, and the boys quickly retreated. There was a quick patter of hailstones on the roof and the sharp breaking of glass, and then the storm seemed to have passed by, and in a few moments the thunder and lightning almost ceased, although the rain still poured down.

The boys hastened to strike a light and to stuff the broken windows with old clothing, for the wind and rain were driving in fiercely.

"I wish the lantern was here," Fred said presently. "We ought to go out and see if the stock are all right; but you couldn't see your hand before your face, it's so dark."

Suddenly Will sprang to his feet, his eyes wide and terrified, his face growing white. "Fred!" he exclaimed in a tone of horror, "I saw a tree fall across the railroad track! There were so many things going on all at once, I never thought of it again until this minute!"

"You did!" Fred's face grew as white as Will's. The railroad crossed their farm about thirty rods from the house, just beyond a little ravine. On the other side of the track and directly opposite the house, was a fine old elm tree. It was this noble tree that Will had seen as it fell across the track; but in the excitement of the moment he had not thought of the terrible danger it would be to the oncoming train. Now it suddenly flashed through his mind.

The two boys stood looking at each other steadily and silently for a moment. What could they do? There was no lantern with which to signal the train. Will glanced at the clock. "It'll be time for the passenger in half an hour," he said. His voice shook and he looked helplessly at Fred.

Fred went to the wood-box, snatched up a handful of newspapers and buttoned them inside of his coat, then hastily stored away a handful of matches in his trousers pocket.

"Come on," he said. "We've got to do something. We can't just stay here, lantern or no lantern." He dashed out of the door, with Will close behind.

Although the worst of the storm was over, it was still raining hard and the wind was blowing in fierce gusts. The lightning had ceased and it was intensely dark. After looking about for an instant, Fred returned to the house and set the lamp in the window, but even then it did not throw its light very far through the rain.

The boys quickly covered the first twenty rods, but their trouble began when they reached the long grass and the underbrush that bordered the ravine. They could see absolutely nothing there, and it was hard to tell in what direction they were going. They were drenched with the rain, and the wind had turned so cold since the hail that it chilled them through and through. Suddenly they splashed into running water.

Will stopped in dismay. "Where in the world are we?" he exclaimed. "Can't you strike a match, Fred? I haven't any idea where I am or which way to go."

But Fred would not risk getting the matches wet. "We're all right," he insisted. "The ravine is filled up with water, that's all. There isn't any place to strike a match," he added. "We'll have to find our way in the dark. We can't miss the track very well when we get out of here, and when we once get on to it we can easily follow till we find the tree."

So they plunged on, through the water and up the farther bank, scratching their hands and faces on the thorn bushes, and tearing their clothes; but at last they stumbled on to the track, and guided by the rails, hastened forward

until they ran into the great tree stretched across it. Even though they expected to find it there, it gave them a shock as they felt the great trunk on the track and imagined the train with its scores of passengers dashing into it.

"Strike a match, Fred, do!" Will insisted excitedly. "You've got a whole pocketful."

Fred turned with his back to the storm, and taking a match from his pocket, carefully sheltered it while he tried to strike it on the under curve of the rail. It would not light. He tried another and another with no better results. "It's no use," he said at last. "They're all wet, and these papers are all soaked through too. I'll have to go back and get some more. You stay here and whistle every little while, when it's time for me to leave the house on the way back here, so I can find you easier," he commanded. Then he was gone.

He ran along the track, finally stumbling down the slippery bank in a kind of blind terror. He had no idea how long it had been since they left the house; it might be time for the train now. Already, in imagination, he saw the cars being hurled down the bank and heard the cries and groans of the injured. He rushed on, stumbling, falling, bruised and scratched, but scarcely knowing it. "Oh, Father, make the train late. Don't let it come before I get back," he whispered over and over.

He burst into the house and looked at the clock. It was five minutes to train time! There was not a second to lose. He seized the box of matches and another bundle of papers and quickly rolled them up in the oilcloth off the kitchen table. Then he caught up an umbrella, thrust it under his arm with the roll of oilcloth, and darted out into the storm again, giving a shrill whistle as he did so.

Will's answering whistle, repeated at short intervals, guided him, and he made quick time back to the track. There was no sound of the train yet, and he drew a quick breath of relief.

He opened the umbrella and told Will to hold it. Then carefully shielding his package, he opened it and struck one of the matches on the strip of sandpaper on the matchbox. The wind blew it out as quickly as it was lighted, but he had better success with the next one and succeeded in lighting one of the papers. He held the blazing torch up under shelter of the umbrella, and by its light he could see the monster tree lying across the track. It was useless for them to try to move it. Then the light went out and they were in darkness again.

Fred rolled the precious bundle up carefully once more, and then taking the umbrella from Will, he held it over the package. It was hard work, for the wind still blew fiercely and tugged and strained at the umbrella, almost wrenching it from his hands; but he was determined that his matches and papers should not get wet this time. "You see," he explained to Will, "as soon as we hear the train we will light first one paper and then another and swing them. That's the only way we can flag the train without a lantern."

The minutes went by and still there was no sign of the train. The boys were shivering, standing there in the keen wind in their wet clothes, and Fred's arm ached cruelly, trying to hold the umbrella steady against the fierce gusts.

Every few minutes Will put his ear to the rail and listened, but there was no sound of the train. It seemed to Fred that the umbrella would be jerked from his tired hands in spite of him, but he set his lips in a stern line and held on grimly. He must not let go. The slow minutes dragged on and still there was no sign of the train. It seemed to the boys that they had been there for hours. At last they carefully unrolled the bundle again and lighted another match so that they could look at Fred's watch. It was ten minutes to ten o'clock! An hour and a quarter past train time!

"Perhaps they've got word some way and aren't coming through," Will suggested doubtfully.

But Fred shook his head. "It isn't likely," he said. "Anyway we don't know, so we will have to stay here."

Then followed another long, weary period of waiting and watching there in the darkness and cold. It seemed to Fred that he could not hold the straining umbrella another second when at last Will, with his ear to the rail, declared that he heard a faint rumble.

The boys were intensely excited at once. "Here," Fred exclaimed, "you hold the umbrella and I'll get everything ready."

Will tried to take it; but Fred's hands were numb, and somehow during the change from one to the other, the wind wrenched it from them, and as they made a wild grab for it they dropped the oilcloth too and the wind whisked it away. The boys groped blindly for it through the mud. They found it presently, but to their horror it had unrolled and both papers and matches lay in a puddle of water, soaked through.

Far up the track the distant rumble of the train grew more distinct.

Fred felt himself growing faint with horror; but it was only for a second. Then he darted up the track as fast as he could run toward the oncoming train. On, on he went, stumbling, falling, but still on. Once he missed his footing in the dark and fell into a culvert, spraining his ankle; but he never stopped.

Nearer and nearer came the humming sound, and then suddenly the great headlight burst into view. Fred tore off his coat and began to wave it frantically. The light was shining full upon him now, and the great iron monster seemed to be rushing down upon him. Still he kept his place there in the middle of the track, waving his coat wildly and shouting himself hoarse. Would they see him in time, or would they—

The thought was left unfinished, for at last he heard the shrill whistle for down brakes.

Fred sprang off the track and went rolling down the bank just as the great train thundered by, and then for the first time in his life he fainted.

When he opened his eyes a few minutes later he found himself surrounded by an excited group of trainmen and passengers. He felt a good deal dazed, but managed to tell them of the tree across the track. The conductor gave orders to start the train and to proceed slowly and cautiously until they reached the obstruction. Fred could not stand on his sprained foot, so they lifted him carefully into one of the cars and established him comfortably among the cushions, where he was quickly surrounded by a group of grateful passengers who insisted on hearing a full account of his night's watch.

He had hardly commenced to answer their questions, however, when the train came to a stop again and the trainmen went ahead with lanterns and axes to clear away the obstruction.

Fred was wondering how he was going to get home again, for he could not bear his weight on his foot, and it was paining him dreadfully, when the door opened and the conductor came in, followed by Fred's father.

"Here the young man is, and I tell you, he is a boy to be proud of," the conductor exclaimed heartily as he led the way to the seat where Fred lay back among the cushions. "It makes me shake to think of where we would all be if it hadn't been for him," he added. "You see that little rise of ground would have kept us from seeing the tree till we were almost on to it, and nothing could have saved us then. This boy has saved us from a bad wreck, and the company will not forget him."

There was a look in his father's eyes as he lifted his boy in his arms that made Fred happier than the thought of anything that the company might do for him.

His father carried him home in his arms, with Will stumbling along beside them. There they found their mother anxiously watching for them.

Their father and mother had reached home just before the arrival of the train, and had been much alarmed at not finding the boys there. Their father had at once started out to search for them, while their mother in her fear for their safety got everything ready in case that they had met with an accident in the storm; and so Fred's foot was quickly bandaged and everything was done to lessen the pain. How good it seemed to be safe at home again, with his mother's hand stroking his hair and a glad light shining in her eyes when she looked at him!

Half an hour later he heard the whistle of the train as it passed the house, and he drew a long, happy breath to think that all the people on it were going on their way safely. "Oh, I'm so glad Will saw that tree fall!" he thought gratefully.





can's shop and spent hours in some secret occupation. Sometimes Duncan was with them, and finally Isaac was admitted to their meetings. They always barricaded the door and steadily refused to reveal what took place. The others were constantly on the *qui vive* to find out the mystery, but it was well kept, and none of them ever suspected what was going on. This lasted ten days, and then the secret meetings suddenly ceased.

Soon afterwards there came a great thaw lasting two days. The melting snow ran in rivulets around the house, and the high banks in front began to sink in great sloughing masses, rendering all outdoor sports very disagreeable.

In the afternoon of the second day the mercury fell, and at bedtime the weather was intensely cold.

On the following morning the boys were awakened by the mutterings of Pat, who had risen early to start his fires. He was poking the embers in the fireplace and soliloquizing in the following strain:

"Arrah! So it's out, is the secret, at last! But it's betther I was thinkin' of the literary capacities of thim b'ys, I was indade. Av it was aquil to their appetites, it's not the way bit notice yonder yes would see, but a volume as big as the house. Tin days of labor wid mystery and barricadin' of doors for the loikes of that bit o' writin'! It's the corn male that's befuddled their brains—the undistilled whisky that's in it, and they take it in such enormous quantities! It's a wonder their jaws doesn't ache wid rheumatism! Av it was cookin' the whole crop I was, crib and all, it's niver a breath they would draw till the last drap had vanished and shtrangulation had inded their days! Tin days wasted writin' a way bit piece o' printin' no bigger than the crown of me hat—av there was a crown in it, bad luck to me poverty!"

"Pat, what do you find to grumble about this bright morning?" called Ransom from his bed.

"Grumble, is it? It's grumble you would yourself, I'm thinkin'. Misther Shtorey, av ye had to make a fire wid all the coals quinned out wid the cowlid."

"No; but you were talking about a piece of printing, or something. What is it?"

"The way bit yonder is it ye mane? Indade, it's the worruk of Misther Frank and thim, and a sorra showin' it is after tin days of mystery and labor under lock and kay."

This conversation awoke others, and in a few moments half a dozen pairs of eyes were curiously reading what Frank and Will had posted in a conspicuous place the night before. It was printed with a pen in large letters on a piece of birch bark, and read as follows:

"The pleasure of your company is requested at Great Bay, Thursday, December the fourteenth, between the hours of eight a. m. and ten p. m., to participate in an entertainment provided at great labor and expense by certain benevolent individuals interested in the welfare of the young. A number of wild animals will

be on exhibition, whose playful antics are expected to contribute greatly to the amusement of the guests."

This notice caused a great deal of merry comment. All thought it had something to do with the mystery of Duncan's shop, and naturally their curiosity was greatly excited.

Duncan smiled but said nothing. Isaac pretended not to notice anything that was going on. Will Staples and Frank Burton strove to look very serious, but the twitching of the corners of their mouths showed that a mighty struggle was going on within.

At the breakfast table, amid the buss of excited conversation, Duncan remarked, laughingly:

"Your surmises are all wrong, boys. Not one of you has guessed the secret; but now I am going to tell you what I propose to do. There is excellent skating on the bay, and I am going to try it after breakfast."

So saying, he reached under his seat and pulled out a clumsy pair of skates.

"I advise you all," he added, "to take a peep under your seats. Perhaps Santa Claus has remembered you also, in anticipation of Christmas."

Underneath the long seats that stood permanently around the table, Pat had ingeniously contrived some broad shelves which he used as receptacles for various articles belonging to the table. There Will and Frank had concealed the skates. The boys drew them out and for a moment sat in silent surprise. Then Carl found his tongue.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" he cried. "Three cheers for the skates and the skate makers!" And in spite of mouths full of corncake and potato the cheers were given with a will.

"How did you fellows manage to make them?" asked Henry when quiet was restored.

"It was a very simple operation," replied Duncan. "We cut off some pieces of strap iron, and after rounding up one end in the shape of a runner, welded on some cross-pieces and punched holes in them for fastening on the woods. I did the welding, but the others made the woods and riveted them on. I think they have done the work remarkably well. Now you must contrive some way to tie them on to your feet, yourselves."

"Well," said Sam, "there is one thing I would like to know. Where are the wild animals, whose antics were to contribute to our amusement?"

"You'll see!" answered Frank.

The boys were wild with excitement and left their breakfast half eaten to hunt for straps and strings, and then rushed pellmell down to the bay to try their new skates.

Frank and Sam followed together, and Frank asked:

"Do you see where the wild animals come in now, Sam?"

"Ha, yes; but I think you fellows were long-headed to anticipate it."

"Not a bit. We felt sure there would be